

# Anglistische Forschungen

Herausgegeben von Dr. JOHANNES HOOPS

Professor an der Universität Heidelberg

~~~~~ Heft I ~~~~~

## Intensives and Down-toners

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### A Study in English Adverbs

by

C. Stoffel

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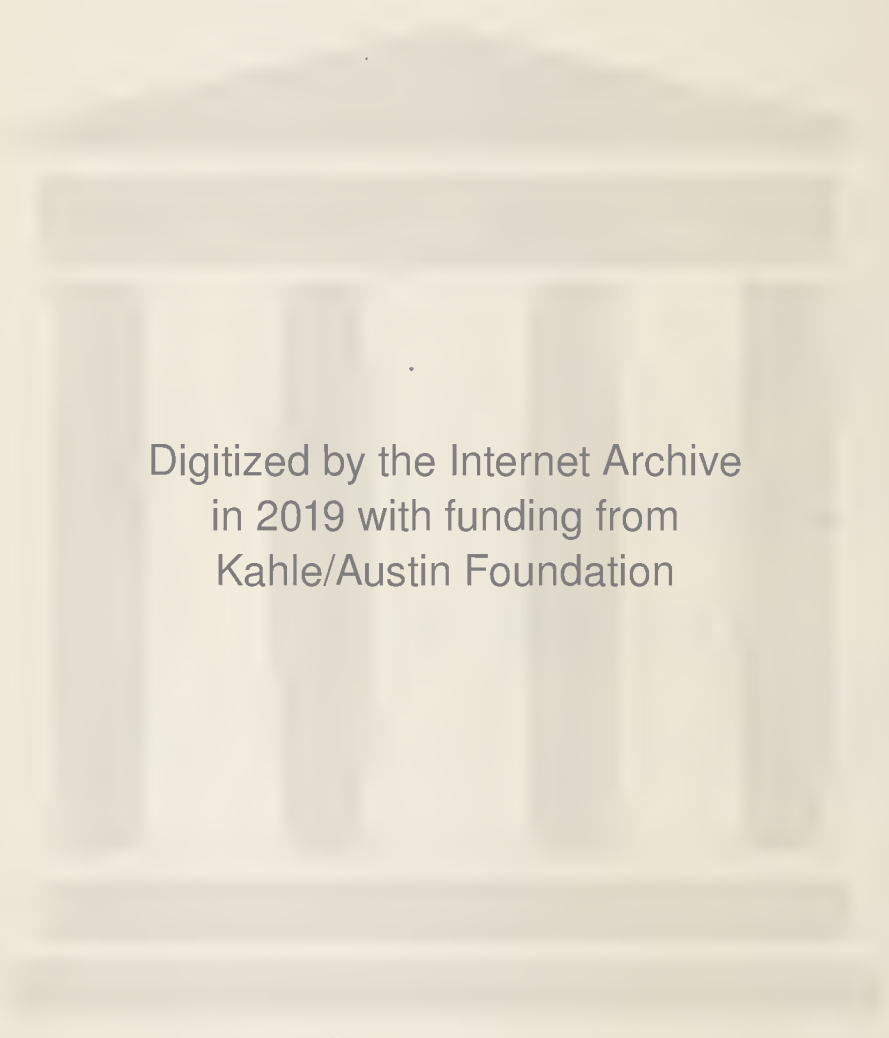
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## Part I.

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### On Intensive Adverbs.

#### I. Introductory.

Of intensives used to modify adjectives and adverbs, it may in general be said that most of them are adverbs derived from adjectives expressing absolute qualities, i. e. such as do not admit of variation, as, for example, *pure*, *full*, *very*, which in their strictest sense do not admit of degrees of comparison.

For this reason they were naturally pitched upon to express the notion of completeness of a quality, so that, as we shall see in the sequel, *pure blind*, which has afterwards changed both its form and its meaning (*purblind*), originally meant «completely blind».

But most of those intensives that originally expressed completeness, have in course of time come to mean merely a high degree of a quality; and this is in exact accordance with one of the well-established facts of word-history. Frequent use is apt to weaken the sense of a word: the general run of speakers are so much given to using hyperbolical language, to «laying it on thick», that the very words they use for this purpose will come to be discounted in the public estimation, and taken for what they are worth,

which is usually a good deal less than what they imply etymologically.

If we want to impress on our hearers the fact that words of this class are to be taken in their etymological sense, they require abnormal stress to call the hearer's attention to the fact that they are to be so understood.

If, for example, on finding a man absent where he had expected to see him, a German says, in a slightly interrogative tone, «*Er ist gewiss krank*», he uses so strong a word as *gewiss*, expressing an absolute quality, to express the notion of «I think it probable»; and if he wants the word *gewiss* in this case to express the absolute certainty which the word implies when used adjectivally, for example in «*ein gewisser Tod*», he has to give it a quite abnormal stress. The same reasoning applies to the Dutch word *zeker* in «*hij is zeker ziek*». Compare also the difference in the stress of *gewisser* as used in «*ein gewisser Herr X*» and in «*ein gewisser Tod*.»

In this way, a great many adverbs, intensives and others, that etymologically express completeness, have had their meaning weakened to the notion of a high or considerable degree. The process is always going on, so that new words are in constant requisition, because the old ones are felt to be inadequate to the expression of the idea of completeness of a quality, or of a quality to the very highest degree of which it is capable under the circumstances. In other words, of certain classes of adverbs the sense is constantly becoming weaker and less emphatic, so that others have to take their place where completeness of a quality has to be expressed.

If a man assures us that he will do a thing «immediately», we have in so many cases been taught by ex-



perience that we had better not take him at his word, that finally this experience has reacted on the sense of the adverb *immediately*, and weakened it to expressing the notion of near instead of instant futurity, which is its etymological sense. Thus, especially in announcements of books on the eve of publication:

Academy, Jan. 6, 1894, 11<sup>c</sup>: Messrs. W. & A. K. Johnston, of Edinburgh, *will publish immediately* a new Atlas of India, based on the most recent Government Surveys, with an introduction by Sir W. W. Hunter. — Literary World, May 12, 1899, 438<sup>b</sup>: Messrs. Hutchinson and Co. *are publishing immediately* a new novel, entitled 'Along the Road', by an author who writes under the nom de plume of 'S. Constance'. — Athenæum, Febr. 18, 1888, 214<sup>b</sup>: Messrs. Macmillan and Co. *will publish immediately* a volume of letters of the late General Gordon, edited by his sister, Miss Gordon. — Compare Punch, April 28, 1894, 193<sup>b</sup>: It is said that *Money* [one of Lord Lytton's plays] is to be *immediately* revived with a strong cast, which is to include the Bancrofts.

Whereas *immediately* has only just begun to slide into the meaning of «before long», another adverbial phrase, *by and by*, has been utterly stripped of its older sense, which was «straightway, directly, at once».

In Middle English *by and by* means «in regular order or succession», «one after another», a sense which, according to Dr. Murray in NED., apparently originates in the use of the preposition *by* to denote succession, as in *man by man*; e. g. Romaunt of the Rose B 4581: These were his wordis *by and by* [orig.: mot a mot]. — Ibid. B 2343—6: Now wol I shortly here reherce, Of that that I have seid in verse, Al the sentence *by and by*, In wordis fewe compendiously. —

Chaucer, Legend of Good Women B 302—5: First sat the god of love, and sith his quene With the whyte coroun, clad in grene; And sithen al the remenant *by and by*, As they were of estaat, ful curteisly.

Prof. Skeat, A Student's Pastime, p. 170, referring to the old sense of *by and by* «in a row», hence, «in due order, successively, gradually, separately, singly», cites from Rob. of Brunne's translation of Langtoft's Chronicle, ed. Hearne, p. 267: He slouh twenti, Ther hedes quyte and clene he laid tham *bi and bi*. — Ibid., p. 73: Whan William . . . had taken homage of barons *bi and bi*. — Ibid., p. 111: This is the genealogie . . . Of kinges *bi and bi*. — Promptorium Parvulorum i. v.: *By and by*, si[n]gil-latim = one by one.

An obvious development of this sense is seen in ME. passages where *by and by* means «near together, side by side»; e. g. Chaucer, Cant. Tales A 1011 (Knichtes Tale): in the tas they founde . . . Two yonge knightes ligging *by and by*. — Ibid. A 4142—3 (Reves Tale): His doghter hadde a bed, al by hir-selve, Right in the same chambre, *by and by*.

From this derives the figurative sense «nearly», «about», «approximately», «pretty much»: The Flower and the Leaf (Bell's Chaucer V 239): Every branche and leafe grew by mesure, Plaine as a bord, of an height *by and by* (= of about the same height).

Another development from the sense «in regular succession», the meaning being transferred from the local to the temporal sphere, is the ordinary sense of *by and by* in Early Modern English, viz. «straightway»; i. e. «in immediate succession, without anything intervening». This sense is aptly illustrated by Auth. Version, Luke 21, 9: for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not *by and*

*by* (Dutch Statenvertaling: *nog is terstond* het einde niet; Vulgate: *sed nondum statim finis*). In Mark 1, 31 the Auth. Version reads: «and *immediately* the fever left her», where Tindale's Bible has: «*By and by* the fever left her» (Vulgate: *et continuo dimisit eam febris*). Compare Matth. 13, 21: «for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, *by and by* he is offended»; Luke 17, 7; «But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him *by and by*, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat?»; Mark 6, 25: «And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me *by and by* in a charger the head of John the Baptist».

This sense «straightway» would seem to have been archaic as early as Shakespeare, who has the phrase *by and by* almost exclusively in the modern sense of «presently», «before long». The only instance I know of in Shakespeare, in which *by and by* means «straightway», is in II Henry VI, II 1, 142: Now fetch me a stool hither *by and by*.

The modern sense «presently», «before long», I find as early as 1549 in Latimer, Seven Sermons (Ed. Arber), p. 72: «I am no sooner in the garden and haue red a whyle, but *by and by* commeth there some or other knocking at the gate»; but Latimer also uses the phrase in the old sense «forthwith» in one of his sermons (quoted in Academy, May 20, 1899, 557<sup>a</sup>): «The clapper [of the church-bell] brake, and we could not get it mended *by and by*; must tarry till we can have it done».

It is worth observing that in *by and by* as used in Mod. Engl. in the sense of «presently», the original meaning «in regular succession» has not been altogether obliterated. For the modern phrase *by and by*, besides denot-

ing near futurity, sometimes connotes that gradual, almost imperceptible coming on of the future event, which the German language expresses by *allmählich*, and which in Dutch is given by the phrase «van lieverlede». Hence in Mod. Engl. *by and by* is sometimes equivalent to «presently by degrees»; e. g. Tauchn. Magazine, Nov. 1892, p. 56: «There had been whispers of a girlish romance a long time ago; but *by-and-by* people looked upon her as a confirmed old maid».

In Dr. M. Krummacher's 'Dictionary of Every-day German and English', «allmählich» is the only sense assigned to *by and by*, which is explaining part of the meaning only; Flügel, with his customary felicity of definition has: «bald, nächstens (im Sinne von: später einmal), mit der Zeit, allmählich».

The adverb *anon* has come by its modern meaning of «soon, in a short time», in very much the same way. Its history is a curious one. It is originally a running together of the Old English phrase *on āne*, «in one», i. e. «in one body, mind, state, act, way, course, motion, movement, moment», the word *ān* being in OE. used substantively also of abstract things; compare Germ. «in einem fort»; Du. «ineenstorten»; and the old phrase *at one*, which has given rise to the verb *atone*. In the Prologue to the Canterbury Tales, in the description of the «Frankleyn», Chaucer, referring to the man's liberal housekeeping, says in line 341: «His breed, his ale, was alwey *after oon*»; with which compare Canterb. T., A 1779—81: «That lord hath litel of discrecioun, That in swich cas can no divisioun, But weyeth pryde and humblesse *after oon*.» In both these passages *after oon* means «according to one invariable standard», and the Franklin's bread and ale are pronounced to



be always «up to the mark». As the use of *one* here referred to has long been obsolete, the line, «His breed, his ale, was alwey after oon», has often been strangely misunderstood. Tyrwhitt's note tells us that *after oon* means «after one o'clock», thus intimating that the Franklin's dinner-hour was a very late one, according to mediæval notions. Another commentator, most likely led astray by some such modern English phrase as «he is always *after one* with his Joe Millers», quietly observes that the line means: «Every one was pressed to partake of his hospitality» (T. H. de Beer and Miss Irving, *The Literary Reader* I 68).

The phrase *in one* is well exemplified in the ME. locution *ever (alway) in oon* = «without interruption, continuously, constantly, always in the same way», e. g.: Chaucer, *Compleynte unto Pite* 8—9 (Skeat's ed. I 272): And when that I, by lengthe of certeyn yeres, Had *ever in oon* a tyme sought to speke. — *Canterb. T.*, E 601—2 (*Clerkes Tale*): but he never hir coude finde, But *ever in oon* y-lyke sad and kinde. — *Ibid.* E 677—8: And *ever in oon* so pacient was she, That she no chere made of hevinesse. — *Ibid.* F 417 (*Squieres Tale*): And *ever in oon* she cryde alway and shrighthe. — *Ibid.* A 1770—1 (*Knightes Tale*): And eek his herte had compassioun Of women, for they wepen (= wept) *ever in oon*. — Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde* IV 1602—3: For *ever in oon*, as for to live in reste, Myn herte seyth that it wol been the beste. — *Ibid.* V 451—2: For *ever in oon* his herte piëtous Ful bisily Criseyde his lady soughte. — *Id.*, *Astrolabe* II 2, 8: This chapitre is so general *ever in oon*, that there nedith no more declaracion; but forget it nat. — *Comp. Id.*, *An Amorous Compleint* (Skeat's Chaucer I, 414) 82—3: *Alway in one* to love you freshly new, By god and by my trouthe, is myn entente.

We learn from the Hist. Engl. Dict. that *anon* was in OE. and ME. used to express the senses of: in one mass; in one and the same condition; in one and the same direction, straight on; straightway, forthwith. — For the last sense, see Matth. 13, 20: He that heareth the word and *anon* with joy receiveth it.

As early as Tindale (1526), however, *anon* had come to be used in the weakened sense of «before long». In Revelations 11, 14, Tindale's Bible reads: «The seconde woo is past, and beholde the thyrd woo wyll come *anon*», where Wycliffe has *soon*, to translate the *cito* of the Vulgate, and the Auth. Version has *quickly*.

This weakened sense is quite the usual one in Shakespeare; e. g. Tempest II 2, 84: Thou do'st me yet but little hurt: thou wilt *anon*; Merch. of Ven. III 5, 77: I will *anon*; first let us go to dinner. — And it is the usual sense in Modern Engl.

Occasionally in Mod. E., from Shakespeare downward, we find (*and*) *anon* in the sense of «and presently again», as, for example, in Prof. Tyndall, Glaciers, I § 2, 11: «The avalanche rushed, sudden at intervals, *and anon* shooting forth.» — Comp. Shak., Henry VIII, III 2, 117: «then stops again, strikes his breast hard, *and anon* he casts his eye against the moon».

Mod. E. also uses the phrase *ever and anon*, which the NED. explains by: «ever and again, every now and then; continually at intervals», and treats as a special case of (*and*) *anon* in the sense of «and presently again».

There can be little doubt that the sense of *ever and anon* from Shakespeare downward has been «every now and then», «continually at intervals»; but I doubt whether the genesis of the phrase is correctly explained in the NED. To explain *ever and anon* as meaning «ever and presently

again», will hardly do, I think. To me it seems far more probable that in *ever and anon*, *and* is intrusive, and that the phrase *ever (and) anon* is lineally descended from the Middle Engl. *ever in oon*, copiously illustrated higher up.

In this last phrase *in one* got assimilated to the word *anon*, which at a much earlier date had sprung from a very nearly allied combination, so that the phrase *ever and anon* must have been preceded by *ever anon*, meaning «without interruption, continuously». Then the phrase *and anon* = «and presently again» influenced both the form and the meaning of *ever anon*, which by blending took the form «*ever and anon*», and came to mean «continually with interruptions», or, «at intervals». It is very probable, also, that the meaning was influenced by the phrase *ever now and then*, afterwards corrupted to *every now and then*.

The earliest instances of *ever and anon* on record are two passages in Shakespeare's works, viz. Love's Labour's Lost V 2, 102, and I Henry IV, I 3, 38: in both of them *ever and anon* means «every now and then». In the same sense Shakespeare uses *still and anon*, King John IV 1, 47: «Like the watchful minutes to the hour, *still and anon* [I] cheered up the heavy time».

In the same way as *by and by* and *anon*, *presently*, which in Shakespeare in the great majority of cases still means «instantly, on the spot», has slid into its modern meaning of «shortly, soon», which, it is true, may also be exemplified from Shakespeare's works. The modern meaning of the word is aptly illustrated by a quotation in Flügel i. v. from Lewes, Physiology of Common Life II 16: «We shall *presently* examine the value of the supposed distinction; *for the present* it is enough to say», etc., and by the following passage from Dickens, Chuzzlewit, 108<sup>a</sup> (Househ. Ed.):

«You are very obliging», returned Martin; «*presently* will not do. I must trouble you to talk to me *at once*». Compare for the old sense, Macbeth IV 3, 143: «but at his touch, Such sanctity hath heaven given his hand, They *presently* amend»; and for the modern sense in Shakespeare, Merch. of Ven. I 3, 169: «And I will go and purse the ducats straight; See to my house, left in the fearful guard Of an unthrifty knave; and *presently* I will be with you».

Exactly the same thing has happened to the M. E. phrase *belive*, originally *bī life*, 'with life, or liveliness', of which the meaning was: «with haste, quickly; at once, forthwith.» This sense got weakened to that of «soon, before long», as for example in Ben Jonson's Sad Shepherd II 2, 142: «Twentie swarme of Bees, Whilke (all the Summer) hum about the hive, And bring me Waxe, and Honey in *by live*»; but the phrase dropt out of use in the seventeenth century, except in Scottish, in which it still survives; e. g. Burns, Cotter's Saturday Night IV: «Belyve, the elder bairns come drapping in».

We learn from the Engl. Dial. Dict. i. v. that in Yorkshire *belive* was formerly used in the specialised sense «in the evening», and it is not a little curious to observe that a word closely allied in meaning, viz. the adverb *soon*, must in Shakespeare's time also have been used in some such specialised sense.

Alexander Gil informs us in his Logonomia Anglica (1619) that in his day one of the meanings of *soon* was «ad primam vesperam». His words are: «Quickly cito, sooner citio aut citius, soonest citissimus aut citissime, nam 'soon' hodie apud plurimos significat ad primam vesperam, olim cito» (quoted from Horace Howard Furness's Variorum Othello p. 232). This goes far to explain the phrase *soon at night*,



which repeatedly occurs in Shakespeare's plays. Dyce's explanation in his Glossary i. v. *soon*: «*soon at, about*», is evidently a mere guess. Richard Grant White, in a note to *Merry Wives* I 4, 8: «we'll have a posset for't *soon at night*», says rather helplessly: «*Soon at* was a phrase used with a meaning which it is not very easy to express. It may, perhaps, be taken to signify 'surely', or 'without let or hindrance', which is, probably, the radical meaning of 'soon'. Alexander Schmidt has i. v. *soon*: «*Soon at night* = this very night, so early as to-day in the evening»; which is not quite satisfactory. *Soon at night* in Elizabethan and Jacobean usage evidently means «at an *early* hour of the evening, *early* in the evening, at night-fall»; e. g. *Othello* III 4, 198: I pray you bring me on the way a little, And say, if I shall see you *soon at night*? — II *Henry IV*, V 5, 96: I shall be sent for *soon at night*. — *Merry Wives* II, 2, 295: Come to me *soon at night*. Ford's a knave, and I will aggravate his style; thou, Master Brook, shalt know him for knave and cuckold. Come to me *soon at night*. — *Rom. and Jul.* II 5, 78: You shall bear the burden *soon at night*.

Grant White also adduces two instances from Marston's plays: *Antonio and Mellida*, Part I, Act III: O wee will mount in triumph: *soon at night*, Ile set his head up. — — What you Will V 1: Gentlemen, as yet I can but thanke you; but I must bee trusted for my ordinary *soon at night*.

Besides *soon at night*, Shakespeare has also *soon at supper(-time)* (*Merch. of Ven.* II 3, 5; *Errors* III 2, 179), and *soon at five o'clock* (*Errors* I 2, 26), which would seem to confirm Gil's explanation *soon* = *ad primam vesperam*, *at night* being an explanatory addition to ensure *soon* being understood in this special sense.

To return to our subject, what adverbial phrase could be more definite, more absolute in sense than the collocation *just now*, as exemplified in the sentence, «I don't think I can be of use *just now*»? And yet the laxity with which negligent speakers are apt to use the phrase, has caused its definiteness to be toned down to the expression of past time, as, for example, in «I saw him *just now*», where *just now* has usurped the place of «a short time ago», the speaker emphasizing the notion of a very near past, by using a phrase denoting present time, just as in *presently* = «soon», the idea of a very near future is emphasized by a term denoting present time also.

In all these cases the psychological explanation of these changes of meaning is the tendency to exaggeration on the speaker's part, which causes his hearers to discount the words used by him; and in the long run it is the hearers and not the speakers that fix the value at which words shall pass current.

After these general remarks on the way in which adverbs have their meaning weakened, we pass on to a detailed discussion of certain adverbs of intensity, in whose history this weakening-process is often strikingly exemplified.

## II. Full; pure.

The usual Old Engl. intensive before adjectives *swīde*, derived from the adjective *swīd* «strong», represented in German by *geschwind*, continued to be used in ME. down to the close of the fourteenth century, when it disappeared from literature. It is found in Wycliffe's New Testament, and there are somewhat rare instances of it in *Piers the Plowman*. In Chaucer's works the adverb *swythe* is found only in

the sense of «quickly»; and in Scottish it seems to be still living as an interjection with the same sense. Robert Burns writes in 'The Ordination': «*Swith* to the Laigh Kirk, one and a', And there tak up your stations».

But as early as the second half of the fourteenth century the usual symbol to denote intensity before adjectives and adverbs was *ful*, which in *Piers the Plowman* and in Chaucer's works does duty in most of those cases where Mod. Engl. from 1500 downwards has used the intensive *very*.

In fourteenth century English, *ful* merely expresses the high degree of a quality and is not usually equivalent to the modern adverb *fully*, which means «completely». Hence such collocations as *full oft*, *full many*, *full well*, *full glad*, etc., some of which have come down to our time as standing phrases.

*Ful* = «very», is exceedingly common in Chaucer's works: in the description of the Prioress in the Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*, this intensive adverb occurs no fewer than eleven times in 45 lines.

The author of *Piers the Plowman* also favours *ful* as an intensive before adjectives and adverbs, and it kept its ground as the regular strengthener till the sixteenth century, when it began to be run hard by *very*, which up to that time had only been used as an adjective in the sense of «true»; e. g. *Cant. Tales*, Prologue 72: «He was a *verray* parfit gentle knight».

In Shakespeare's works the adverb *full* occurs both as a mere intensive, e. g. in such phrases as *full dearly*, *full little*, *full many a*, *full oft*, etc., and as synonymous with *fully*, especially before *as*, and before numerals: *full as deep*, *full as lovely*, *full so valiant*, *full three thousand ducats*, *not full a month*, etc.

In Mod. Engl., as already hinted, the intensive *full* is only retained in poetry, and in certain standing phrases bearing an archaic character.

In fourteenth century English, *ful* was not, however, the only intensive. Another adjective, of Romance origin, which, like *full*, expresses a quality hardly susceptible of variation, was also occasionally used adverbially as an intensive, viz. the word *pure*, of which the earliest instances as an adjective in English would seem to occur in Robert of Gloucester (ab. 1300).

It is this use, and certain other functions of *pure*, that I am now going to illustrate from Middle Engl. and early Mod. Engl., since they show a very remarkable analogy with certain uses of Mod. Engl. *very*.

I shall first give examples of *pure* as a mere intensive adverb with the sense of Mod. E. *very*.

S. Bernard 205—6 [Horstmann, *Altenglische Legenden*, 1878]: He hedde a broþer, þat was a kniht, þat of his wordus lette *pure* liht (= set *very* little store by). — Sir John Maundeville (ed. Halliwell), p. 130: There is god lond, but it is *pure* litille. — Piers the Plowman (ed. Skeat), C XVI 308—9: Whan deth a-waketh hem of here wele that were here so ryche, Than aren hit *pure* poure thyngis in purgatorie other in helle. — Ibid. C XIX 103—4: *Pure* fayn ich wolde a-saye what sauour hit hadde. — Ibid. C VIII 20: Godes pyne and hus passion is *pure* selde in my thouhte. — Chaucer, Boke of the Duchesse 1010 (ed. Skeat): So *pure* suffraunt (= tolerant) was hir wit.

Before adjectives and adverbs that admit of having their meaning thus modified, ME. *pure* is also found with the sense of «completely, quite», a sense in which *ful* is rare in Middle Engl.

S. Magdalena 255 [Horstmann, ut supra]: bi wif, þe naddre, heo is amad: ich holde hire *puyr* wod (= stark mad). — Ibid. 249: For soþe, heo was *puyrliche* unwys: in sawe and in spelle. — Robert of Gloucester, in Morris and Skeat's Specimens, II 14, 389—90: Wo-so bi king Willames Daye slow hert oþer hind, Me ssolde pulte out boþ is eye and makye him *pur* blind.

The quotation last given is interesting, since it shows the origin of the modern word *purblind*, now used in the weakened sense of the German *blödsichtig* only, but originally of course meaning what is now expressed by *stoneblind*. Skeat, Etym. Dict. i. v. observes that as late as Shakespeare the old sense was still in use, though the modern meaning, too, is found in Shakespeare's works. In *Romeo and Juliet*, II 1, 12, Cupid is called Venus' «purblind son», where we have the old sense, whereas in *Venus and Adonis* 679 the «purblind hare» can only be understood as the *near-sighted* or *half-blind* hare.

With this sense of *pure* = «completely, quite», we may compare the Dutch colloquialism, «Ik ben er *puur* mee verlegen.»

A third sense in which adverbial *pure* is met with, naturally flows from the sense of the adjective: I mean the sense of «merely, exclusively, only», an acceptation in which in Mod. E. the fuller form *purely* is common enough. There is a good example of *pure* in this sense in Shakespeare's *Twelfthnight* V 82: «For his sake Did I expose myself, *pure* for his love, Into the danger of this adverse town», — with which compare the Dutch, «Ik deed het *puur* (or louter) om hem te pleizieren».

It is a not unusual practice in English, especially in the older stages of the language, to use corresponding



adjectives, prefixed to either the subject or the object noun in a sentence, for the purpose of expressing adverbial modifications of the predicate. In Shakespeare's *Henry VIII.* IV 1, 27, for instance, «The Archbishop of Canterbury . . . . held a late court at Dunstable», — *held a late court* evidently means «lately held a court».

In this way such adverbs as *pure* or *purely* (= exclusively) were in Early Mod. E. often replaced by the corresponding adjectives, the latter being prefixed to some noun in the sentence. Thus it would not have been in any way against Shakespeare's practice, if in the above passage from *Twelfthnight*, instead of «pure for his love», the text had run. «for his pure love».

In Middle Eng. the adverb *pure(ly)* = «exclusively», is often thus treated, and in these cases it offers a remarkable analogy with certain modern uses of *very*.

If in Washington Irving's *Sketchbook* [The Wife] we read: «He doted on his lovely burthen for its *very* helplessness», we have a clear case of transposed epithet of the kind just referred to: the adjective *very* evidently stands for a sentence-modifying adverb, denoting that the helplessness of his lovely burthen was in itself a reason for his doting on her. It would be somewhat difficult to hit on an adverb that would exactly cover this meaning. *Exclusively* would not do; *exactly*, *precisely* would be somewhat nearer the mark, but still not quite satisfactory.

Now, in Middle Eng. the adjective *pure* is used in exactly the same way as *very* in the quotation from Washington Irving. Thus in Chaucer's *Hous of Fame* (ed. Skeat), II 823—5, we have: «Now have I told, if thou have minde, How speche or soun, of *pure* kinde, Enclyned is upward to meve»; where the meaning is, that the nature of sound is

in itself the cause of its moving upward. — Compare *ibid.* I 279—82: «For this shal every woman finde That som man, of his *pure* kinde, Wol shewen outward the faireste, Til he have caught that what him leste».

The following quotations exhibit *pure* in senses nearly allied to the one just referred to, and almost without exception expressed by *very* in Mod. E. Compare, for example, with the passages I am going to cite, the use of *very* in such modern phrases as «from *very* fear», «from *very* ignorance», «for *very* peace' sake».

Piers the Plowman (ed. Skeat) C, IX 124: Quath Peers the ploughman al in *pure* tene. — *Ibid.* B VII 116: And Pieres for *pure* tene pulled it atweyne. — Romaunt of the Rose (ed. Skeat) A 275—6: And [she] hath such wo, whan folk doth good, That nigh she melteth for *pure* wood. — Chaucer, Book of the Duchesse (ed. Skeat) 1212—13: Softe and quaking for *pure* drede, and shame. — *Ibid.* 1208—10: For many a word I over-skipte In my tale, for *pure* fere, Lest my wordes mis-set were. — *Ibid.* 490—1: The blood was fled, for *pure* drede, Doun to his herte. — *Id.*, Troilus and Criseyde (ed. Skeat), II 666—7: And with that thought, for *pure* a-shamed, she Gan in hir heed to pulle, and that as faste.

And with the use of *pure* as found in the passages following, compare Washington Irving's Rip van Winkle: «My *very* dog has forgotten me!»

Piers the Plowman C, X 184—5: For loue of here lowe hertes oure lord hath hem graunted Here penaunce and here purgatorie vp-on thys *pure* erthe. — Chaucer's Knightes Tale 1279—80: The *pure* fettres on his shines grete Weren of his bittre salte teres wete. — *Id.*, Book of the

Duchesse 583—4: The *pure* deeth is so my fo, [Thogh] I wolde deye, hit wolde not so.

It is worth noting that in Middle E. the adjective *fine* is sometimes found used in exactly the same sense; e. g. Troilus and Criseyde V 421—2: «But sin of *fyne* force I moot aryse, I shall aryse, as sone as ever I may». — Here, as Prof. Skeat notes, *of fyne force* means «by very necessity». —

One of the Chaucer quotations above given contains the remarkable phrase *for pure ashamed* = «from very shamefastness», which tempts me to make a few remarks, suggested by a note in the fifth volume of Skeat's Chaucer. I shall therefore here beg leave to make a somewhat lengthy digression from the subject in hand.

Leon Kellner, Historical Outlines of English Syntax, p. 154, commenting on such passages as Puttenham, Arte of English Poesy (ed. Arber) p. 20: 'A Poet may in some sort be said a follower or imitator, because he can expresse the *true* and *liuely* of euey thing is set before him', and Paradise Lost VIII 453: 'My *earthly*, by his *heavenly* over-powered', says: «This licence [of using adjectives as substantives in the singular] seems to have died out with the Elizabethan(?) authors; only a few adjectives in the positive degree, such as *good*, *ill*, and many in the superlative, chiefly in adverbial phrases, have survived. I'll do my *best*. He got the *worst* of it. At *least*, in *future*, etc.» Compare Measure for Measure II 4, 170: «Say what you can, my *false* o'erweighs your *true*».

A special case of such nounal use of adjectives in Middle E. is exemplified in Chaucer's use of adjectives preceded by «causal» *for*, e. g. in such phrases as «for moist», «for brighte», where in Mod. E. abstract nouns ending in *-ness* would be employed.



I shall first give a number of Middle E. examples: Piers the Plowman B V 119: That al my body bolneth *for bitter* of my galle. — Romaunt of the Rose A 74—5: The briddes . . . Ben in May, *for the sonne brighte*, So glade [*sonne* being a genitive]. — Troilus and Criseyde II 862—4: What is the sonne wers, of kinde righte, Though that a man, for feblesse of yën, May nought endure on it to see *for brighte*? — Canterb. Tales D 393—4 [Wife of Bath's Prologue]: Of wenches wolde I beren him on honde, Whan that *for syk* unnethes mighte he stonde. — R. of the Rose A 1563—5: Abouten it is gras springing, *For moiste* so thikke and wel lyking, That it ne may in winter dye. — Ibid. A 276: Nigh she melteth *for pure wood*. — Hous of Fame III 1747: That wimmen loven us *for wood* (= as if mad, «like mad»). — Legend of Good Women, 2419—20: The see, by nighte, as any torche brende *For wood* (= with mad fury), and posseth him now up now down.

The phrases *for pure ashamed* (in Troilus) and *for the sonne brighte* clearly prove that we have here to do with a nounal use of the adjective, and that *for* is a preposition. Mod. E. has preserved this type of phrase only in rare instances, one of them being *for short*, in the sense of *for shortness' sake*, which is not uncommon, also in spoken English; e. g. Punch, Sept. 29, 1894, 150<sup>b</sup>: «We call him Jonni, *for short*»; Literary World, July 28, 1899, 66<sup>c</sup>: Pecci, as *for short* we may call him [who afterwards became Leo XIII]. — Compare also *for good*, which is not only used in the sense of *omnino* = «for good and all»,<sup>1</sup> but also means «for a good purpose»; e. g. Ormulum 10310: «Nohht ne comm pat lape flocc Till Sannt Johann *forr gode*»; Dickens, Christmas Carol I: «The misery with them all was, clearly, that they sought to interfere, *for good*, in human matters, and had lost the power for ever».

As phrases of the type described I also consider five instances in Chaucer's works, which Skeat prints *for-hoor*, *for-old*, *for-black*, *for-dronken*, and *fordrye*, and explains in a different way.

In the Glossarial Index (Vol. IV of Skeat's Chaucer) Skeat has: «*For-hoor*, adj. very hoary, Rom. of the Rose, 356»; and in a note on p. 85 of the fifth volume of his Chaucer, the editor says; «*for-old*, very old; *for-black* is generally explained as *for blackness*; it means *very black*»; on p. 383: «*fordrye*, exceedingly dry»; and on p. 95: «*for-dronken*, very drunk.» Prof. Skeat evidently means that in the combinations *for-hoor*, *for-old*, *for-black*, etc. we have the prefix *for-* in the sense of «very» before adjectives.

Of this prefix *for-*, Henry Bradley in NED. i. v. *For-*, II 10, says: «Giving to an adj. the sense of an absolute superlative, 'very', 'extremely'; as *for-black*, *-cold*, *-dry*, *-dull*, *-faint*, *-great*, *-hoar*, *-old*, *-weary*; *for-dead*, utterly speechless and still. — OE. had *for-wel*, very well, very. *for-ēade*, very easily, *for-oft*, very often . . . Cf. ON. *for-litill*, very little, *for-mikill*, very great, etc.; also the use of Sw. *för*, Da. *for*, in the sense of 'too'. It is remarkable that nearly all Chaucer's examples of these compounds admit of being explained as instances of *for* prep. governing an adj. . . . It is possible that Chaucer himself may have apprehended the combinations in this manner».

The last supposition I, for one, consider not as «possible» only, but as almost sure.

The passages in Chaucer's works that here concern us, are printed as follows in Skeat's edition: Romaunt of the Rose A 355—6: «Ful salowe was waxen hir colour, Hir heed *for-hoor* was, whyt as flour». — Here Thynne's edition (1532) prints *for hore*; the form *for-hoor* is due to the Editor,

for ll. 333—380 of Fragment A are lost in the only MS. in which the poem is preserved. The corresponding lines in the original are: «Toute sa teste estoit chenuë. Et blanche cum s'el fust florie». — Canterbury Tales A 2142—4 (Knightes Tale): «He hadde a beres skin, col-blak, *for-old*. His longe heer was kembd behind his bak, As any ravenes fether it shoon *for-black*». — CT., A 3120 (Miller's Prologue): «The Miller, that *for-dronken* was al pale». — CT., A 4150 (Reves Tale): «Ful pale he was *for-dronken*, and nat reed». — CT., F 409—11 (Squieres Tale): «Amydde a tree *fordrye*, as whyt as chalk, As Canacee was pleying in hir walk, Ther sat a faucon over hir heed ful hye».

In two of these passages Skeat's edition exhibits various readings, viz. the first, already referred to, and the last, where some MSS. read *fordryed*, *fordreyed*, but according to Skeat's foot-note the best have *fordrye*, *for-drye*. We are not told why the editor has not put the hyphen in the text in this case, as he has done in *for-black*, *for-old*, *for-dronken*, and *for-hoor*. I do not know whether Chaucer MSS. as a rule make use of hyphens in cases where we find them in Skeat's printed text. From what I can find out by a comparison of the facsimiles contained in Skeat's edition with the printed text, they do not. To the passage last quoted we have on p. 383 of Vol. V, the note: «*fordrye*, exceedingly dry. The tree was white too, owing to loss of its bark», etc.

Prof. Skeat accordingly holds that in these passages we have instances of adjectives with the prefix *for-* strengthening their meaning, and, unlike Henry Bradley, he evidently does not admit the possibility of Chaucer's having apprehended the combinations as consisting of the preposition *for* followed by an adjective used as a substantive.

The cases given are the only ones occurring in Chaucer's works, but the NED. exemplifies adjectives with the strengthening prefix *for-*, also from other writers.

From *Seuyn Sages* (ab. 1320) 2623, Bradley quotes: «He was *forcold*, and lokede about». In Mätzner's *Altengl. Wtb.* i. v. *forcolen*, the preceding line 2622 is thus cited: «The weder was cold and froward»; and Mätzner looks upon *forcold* in this passage as the p. p. of a verb *forcolen*, with which he compares «ags. *cōlian*, algere, u. niederdeutsch *verküllen*, erkälten». I conclude that this is a doubtful case.

There is better evidence for *fordead* = utterly speechless and still; but unfortunately, it is two centuries later than Chaucer. It is from Gabr. Harvey's *Pierce's Super.* 66: «Who would haue thought . . . to haue found . . . the elocution of the Divels oratour . . . so *fordead*»; *ibid.* 133: «There is . . . no such libbard for a lively ape as *fordead* silence».

Far nearer to Chaucer is Lydgate's use of *fordull*, which the NED. instances from his *Minor Poems* (Percy Soc.) 191: «To teche a rude *for-dull* asse», and also from *The Marriage of Wit and Science* (ab. 1570) IV 3 in Hazlitt's *Dodsley* II 368: «Ye sprites, *fordull* with toil». As regards the quotation from Lydgate, reference to Mätzner, *Altenglisches Wtb.* i. v. *fordullen*, shows that the context is: «I hold hym madde that bryngeth forth his harppe, Therone to teche a rude *fordulle* asse»; Mätzner observes that we should read *fordulled* in three syllables, the p. p. of the verb *fordullen*, and there is no doubt that the metre requires three syllables in this line.

The following quotation in NED. is for *for-great*, and is taken from *Penitential Psalms* (ab. 1440) 2: «My soule hath . . . Forgret mester to make mouns». — This

would seem to be a clear case of *for-* prefixed to an adjective, with the sense of «very».

The NED.'s non-Chaucerian quotation for *for-old* is from *Gawaine and the Greene Knight* 1440, and is doubtful, Mr. Bradley adding in parentheses: «? or is this a verb».

The last two quotations in NED., for *for-weary*, are both of them taken from Mätzner; they are: William of Palerne 2443: «Wel out from alle weyes *for-wery* þei hem restyd»; and *Romaunt of the Rose* 3335 [not Chaucer's]: «I, lefte alle sool, *Forwery*, forwandred as a fool»; to which I am able to add from Chaucer's *Parlement of Foules* 92—94: «But fynally my spirit, at the laste, *For-wery* of my labour al the day, Took rest»; to these quotations I shall return by and by.

Finally, the NED. still registers an obsolete adjective *forfaint* «very faint», which it exemplifies from Sackville, *Induction to the Mirrour of Magistrates* XV: «With that worde of sorrowe all *forfaynt* She looked up». — Since, however, we also find *forefaynted* in the same sense in the NED.'s next quotation (1566), it is highly probable that *forfaint* as used by Sackville, is merely a contraction of *forfainted*, formed on the analogy of *forwept*, *forwandred*, *forwearied*, etc. At all events the case is a doubtful one.

In all other cases in which a word with the prefix *for-* is used adjectivally, we have to do with past participles of verbs with the prefix *for-*, such as, for instance, *fordronken*, *fordrunken*, *forwandred* (*Piers the Plowman*, B, Prologue 7: I was wery *forwandred* and went me to reste), *forwept*, *forwaked*, *forwalked*, etc.

The quotations exhibiting *forwery* = «exceedingly tired», would seem to require some further discussion. In William of Palerne: «*Forwery* þei hem rested», it is true,



nothing would forbid us to read *for wery* = «on account of their weariness». But in the quotation from the Parlement of Foules it seems more natural to explain *forwery* = «dead tired», than *for wery* = «on account of my weariness». I am inclined to think that the adj. *forwery* has been evolved from the verb *forverien* «to weary out», of which the past participle *forweried* is used in the same sense as *forwery*. Mätzner quotes Genesis and Exodus 3893 (XIII century): «*Ford deden* he comen to Salmona, *forweried* grucheden he *doa*»; and Palsgrave (1530): «I *forwerye*, je lasse». Spenser has *forwearied* and *foreweried*, at least in the Globe text, edited by Dr. Morris; Shakespeare has once *forewearied*, which modern editors change into *forwearied*.

I conclude that, apart from Old English, the evidence for the existence in Middle English of adjectives formed with the strengthening prefix *for-* is very scanty. All the alleged instances of them in Chaucer admit of being otherwise explained. Of non-Chaucerian examples, only two are quite indubitable, viz. *for-great* in the Penitential Psalms, and the late *fordead* (1592) in Gabr. Harvey.

Returning to the instances I have cited from Chaucer, I come to the word *fordrye* in the Squire's Tale, which also Mätzner explains to mean «sehr trocken, dürr». The various readings cited higher up, *fordryed* and *for-dreyed*, prove that the word was not quite clear to the scribes. I have already said that I do not know Skeat's reason for printing *fordrye* without the hyphen which he uses in the other cases, but after all that I have hitherto adduced, the reader will hardly deem it rash in me, if in CT., F 4091 (Squieres Tale) I propose to read, with change of punctuation also: «Amidde a tree, *for drye* as whyt as chalk», which is exactly parallel with Rom. of the Rose A

356 in Thynne's text (see *supra* p. 20): «Hir heed *for hore* was whyt as flour»; and with Rom. of the R. A 1563—4: «gras . . . *for moiste* so thikke and wel lyking», where the original has: «Tout entour point l'erbe menue, Qui vient *por l'iaue* espesse et drue». The meaning of l. 4091 in the Squire's Tale is then: A tree as white as chalk owing to its dryness.

And in the same way, in the passage from the Knight's Tale, I take *for old* to mean «on account of its oldness», and *for black*, «on account of its blackness.» And though I shall certainly not deny the existence of the participial adjective *fordronken* with the sense of «intoxicated», I am equally convinced that in the two passages from the Miller's Prologue and the Reeve's Tale, «for dronken» should be printed in two words, and be interpreted as «owing to drunkenness». It is quite immaterial whether in this case we consider *dronken* as a participial adjective used as an abstract substantive, in the same way as *ashamed* in *for pure ashamed*; or whether we look upon *dronken* as the representative of the Old Engl. *druncen*, ebrietas (Grein), Goth. *drugkanei*. Compare A Moral Ode 249 (Specimens I 210): «þeo þat luued reving and stale and hordom and *drunken*»; *ibid* 254: «And þe þat sunegeþ ofte on *drunken* and on méte».

The line from the Reeve's Tale, especially: «Ful pale he was *for dronken*, and nat reed», becomes quite easy if we understand *for dronken* in the way indicated, whereas Skeat's explanation: «*for-dronken* = very drunk» will hardly make sense of the passage.

I have already mentioned that in l. 356 of the Rom. of the R., where Skeat prints: «Hir heed *for-hoor* was, whyt as flour» I propose to read: «Hir heed *for hoor* was whyt as flour» = her head was white as flour owing to its hoariness. —

After this long digression let us return to the adverb *pure(ly)* and trace its subsequent history.

In *Piers the Plowman* C XVI 225—6, we have: «For sutthe he hath the power that seynt Peter hadde, He hath *pureliche* the pot with the same salve»; and a few lines further on (230—1): «Ne [may] mannes preier make pees among Cristine people, Till prude be *pureliche* for-do». — In both these passages *pureliche* means «completely», «absolutely». In this sense *purely* is still a living word, as, for example, in «a *purely* accidental meeting». *Comp. Punch*, Sept. 10, 1892, 109<sup>a</sup>: «Among the Muses of Mayfair A Bacchanal with unbound hair, And loosened girdle, Would be as *purely* out of place As Atalanta in a race O'er hedge and hurdle».

The adjective phrase *pure and simple*, always attributive and placed after the substantive, with the sense of «mere, sheer, without any foreign admixture», which is creeping into use, would seem to be a borrowing from the French, in which «*pur et simple*» is originally a legal phrase, e. g. «*promesse pure et simple*» = unconditional promise. Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* I 55 (Tauchn.): «a country-house, built for enjoyment *pure and simple*, with not an acre of troublesome land attached to it beyond what was required for residential purposes». — *Academy*, April 2, 1898, 369<sup>a</sup>: «Here we have the 'Society' Mr. Hichens *pure and simple*».

Before adjectives the adverbial intensive *pure* is still in colloquial use, I think. Charles Lamb, writing to Thomas Manning [*Letters* I 169, ed. Ainger], says: «When you come to see me, mount up to the top of the stairs — I hope you are not asthmatical — and come in flannel for 'tis *pure* airy up here».



Dr. Fitzedward Hall, *Modern English* 250, quotes from Miss Carter's *Letters* III 198: «Mrs. Talbot is *pure* well, and really bears up surprisingly»; and from Gray's *Correspondence with Mason*, p. 288: «He has picked up again *purely*, since his misfortune», where *purely* means «completely», «surprisingly». Compare Congreve, *Love for Love* II 1: «I'll swear you can keep your countenance *purely*; you 'd make an admirable player»; id., *ibid.*: «Mr. Tattle is all over sweet; his peruke is sweet, and his gloves are sweet — and his handkerchief is sweet, *pure* sweet, sweeter than roses».

The eighteenth century use of *purely*, as applied to recovered health, exemplified in some of the quotations just given. has drawn the attention of Thackeray, who imitates it in *The Virginians* II 250 (Tauchn.): «How were the ladies of Oakhurst and Miss Hetty, who was ailing when he passed through in the autumn? *Purely?* Mr. Warrington was very glad».

This use of *purely* has become vulgar in our days. In *Notes and Queries*, Nov. 6, 1897, 377 a, a correspondent, after quoting from Richardson's *Pamela*: «Well he is kinder and kinder and, thank God, *purely* recovered», tells an anecdote of a gentleman meeting a rustic on the road, who inquired after his health, and, in good nature, added, «I hope, sir, the ladies are all *pure*». Another contributor, on p. 376 of the same number of *N. & Q.*, writes: «Calling on an old man in Suffolk, I asked him how he was, on which he answered, «*Purely*, thank you, sir». Thinking from his pronunciation he meant «poorly», I said I was very sorry. His dear old face was a picture!»

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries not only the adverb *pure(ly)* was employed to express completeness,

or a high degree of a quality; the adjective *pure*, too, was used in the vague commendatory sense in which «nice» is so common in Victorian English. In Wycherley's *Country Wife* III 1, the heroine is made to say: «What *pure* lives the London ladies live abroad, with their dancing, meeting and junketing, and drest every day in their best gowns», where she certainly does not mean «pure lives» in the modern sense. Compare Colley Cibber, *The Provoked Husband* IV 1: «Well, that will be *pure!*» — Congreve, *Old Bachelor* V 1; «You 're a *pure* man!» (= «ein sauberer Bruder», with which compare the ironical use of *nice* in «a nice fellow».) — Swift, *Journal to Stella*, Dec. 10, 1710: «I am come home after a *pure* walk in the Park: delicate weather begun only to-day». — Id., *ibid.*, Dec. 15, 1710: «I dined to-day with Lewis and Ford, whom I have brought acquainted. Lewis told me a *pure* thing». — Id., *ibid.* Febr. 15, 1710/11: «I walked *purely* to-day about the Park, the rain being just over».

### III. Very; right.

The Mod. E. intensive before adjectives and adverbs, par excellence, is *very*, which, as already mentioned, did not come into use in this function before the sixteenth century.

The oldest example known to me of *very* as an intensive before adjectives and adverbs, is in Stephen Hawes, *Passetyme of Pleasure* (1506), ch. XXXIII, st. 15 (Skeat, *Specimens* III 122): «And whan that I had sene every thinge, My spere I charged, that was *very* great». It is pretty frequent in Sir Thomas More's works: *A Dialogue concernynge Heresy*es (1528), Bk. III, ch. 16 (Skeat, *Specimens* III 183): «all suche priestes too, as can no more than theyr grammer, and *verye scantly* that». Id., *ibid.* (*ibid.* p. 190): «conteynyng

suche hygh dyfficulties as *verye few* lerned men can *very wel* attayne». Id., *ibid.* (*ibid.* p. 192): «he, whych in two so plain englishe wordes, . . . can not tell when he should take the tone, and when the tother, is not, for translating into englishe, a man *very mete*». And in Sir Thomas Elyot, *The Governor* (1531), ch. XVII (Skeat, *Specimens* III 195): »Wrastlynge is a *very good* exercise in the begynnynge of youthe;» in Hugh Latimer, *Sermon on the Ploughers* (1549) (Sk. Sp., p. 239): «When I was a scholer in Cambrydge my selfe, I harde *verye good* reporte of London». Id., *ibid.* (*ibid.* p. 241): «a greate meany of this kynde of ploughmen which are *very busie* and woulde seme to be *verie good* worckmen».

In Middle E. (Langland, Chaucer) *verrai*, *verray*, in Wycliffe spelt *verray*, *verri*, always accented on the first syllable, represents the O. Fr. *verrai*, *verai*, and is used only as an adjective, meaning «true», «genuine», «real».

My oldest example for this English word is from the Old Kentish Sermons (before 1250), edited by Dr. Morris (*Specimens* I 142, 41—3): «and be þet hi offrede stor (= incense) þet me offrede wylem be þo ialde laghe to here godes sacrefise: seawede þe[t] he was *verray* prest».

It should be noted that a few lines higher up in the same sermon we have: «seawede þet he was *sothfast* king»; and that the Old Kentish Sermons were translated from the French.

From *Piers the Plowman* I quote C XXII 421: «by *verrai* god, ich wolde That no cardinal come a-mong the comune people».

Chaucer, *Cant. T.*, B 167 (*Man of Lawes Tale*): «Hir herte is *verray* chambre of holinesse». *Ibid.* A 72: «He was a *verray* parfit gentle knight». *Ibid.* A 422: «He was a *verray* parfit practisour». *Ibid.* A 1550—1: «Of his

linage am I, and his of-spring, By *verray* ligne, as of the stok royal». Ibid. E 342—3: «Thise arn the wordes that the markis sayde To this benigne *verray* feithful mayde». Ibid. G 165—6: And if that it a *verray* angel be, Than wol I doon as thou hast preyed me». Ibid. I 85: «Penitence, with certayne circumstances, is *verray* repentance of a man that halt him-self in sorwe and other payne for hise giltes». Troilus and Criseyde, I 202: «O *verrey* foles! nyce and blinde be ye!» Chaucer's A. B. C, 105—6: «O *verrey* light of eyen that ben blinde, O *verrey* lust of labour and distresse, O tresorere of bountee to mankinde, Thee whom God chees to moder for humblesse!»

Wycliffe, St. John 1, 9: «It was *verrey* ligte the whiche ligteneth eche man comyng into this worlde». Ibid. 16, 1: «I am a *verrey* vine, and my fadir is an erthe tilier».

It is clear from these examples that *verrai* in Middle E. answers more to Mod. E. *real*, *genuine*, than to Mod. E. *true*, for which Middle E. usually employs *trewe* and *sooth*.

A further discolouring of the original sense is seen in Piers the Plowman C XX 271 (= B XVII 289): «Thus 'veniaunce! veniaunce!' *verray* charite asketh», where *very* *charity* means «even charity herself», and where we see the same use of an adjective to express the sense of a sentence-modifying adverb, which we have observed in the case of *pure* (see ante, p. 16). I need hardly remind the reader that this function of the adjective *very* is still exceedingly common in Mod. E., as, for instance, in «My very dog has forsaken me».

Of such uses of the adjective *very* there are copious examples also in Chaucer, e. g. Cant. T., B 101—3 (Prologue of the Man of Law's Tale): To asken help thee shameth in thyn herte; If thou noon aske, with nede artow so wounded,

That *verray* nede unwrappeth al thy wounde hid! — Ibid. B 3237—9: By *verray* force, at Gazan, on a night, Maugree Philistiens of that citee, The gates of the toun he hath up-plight. — Ibid. F 859—60: But whan she saugh the grisly rokkes blake, For *verray* fere so wolde hir herte quake.

In Mod. E. the adjective *very* is still occasionally used in the sense of *genuine*. In Shakespeare it is common enough in this sense. In *Merch. of Venice* III 2, 225: «by your leave I bid my *very* friends and countrymen, Sweet Portia, welcome», *my very friends* is altogether different in meaning from the same combination of words when used in such a modern sentence as «*My very friends* have forsaken me.» Compare Auth. Version, Genesis 27, 21: «And Isaac said unto Jacob, Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou be my *very* son Esau or not»; and such modern phrases as «He is the *very* picture of his father», «a *very* fool».

Dickens, *Dombey and Son* II 233 (Tauchn.): A patch of ground which had once been . . . a pleasant meadow, and was now a *very* waste. — Chas. Lever, *Gwynne* III 180 (T.): Deep crape weepers encircled his arms to the elbows, and a *very* banner of black hung mournfully from his hat. — Bulwer, *Pelham*: One tall naked oak, a *very* token of desolation and decay. — Comp. Lily, *Euphues* (1580), ed. Arber, p. 74: If she should yeelde at the first assault, he would thinke her a light huswife: if she should reject him scornfully a *very* haggard.

In this sense the superlative *veriest* is still quite common; e. g. Dickens, *Christmas Carol* II; «He then conveyed him and his sister into the *veriest* old well of a shivering best-parlour that ever was seen»; Academy, Febr. 19, 1898, 200<sup>a</sup>:



«A work interesting to the *veriest* layman, who understands nothing of bosses, piscina, triforia, spandrels, and other mysteries of the architectural cult». Comp. Winter's Tale, I 2, 66: «Was not my lord the *verier* wag o'the two?»

But, as we have seen, as early as the fourteenth century the adjective *very* began to be employed to express the sense of a sentence-modifying adverb (see ante, p. 30), a sense that in Mod. E. may in most cases also be expressed by the adverb *even*.

*Even* in «Even Homer sometimes nods», is what Sweet calls a «word-sentence-modifying» adverb, because, though singling out one particular word, it still modifies the sentence as a whole, for it represents Homer's nodding as a thing which may well startle his admirers.

This function of the adjective *very* — to express the sense of the word-sentence-modifying *even* — I have exemplified from Piers the Plowman in the case of *verray Charite* = «even Charity itself». It is a purely grammatical function, and *very* has in this case become an «empty» word. I need not multiply instances of this use of the adjective *very* from Mod. E., for it is much more common there than the use of *very* in the sense of «genuine, real», which, is not a purely grammatical function.

Still another word-sentence-modifying function of the adjective *very* is seen in «in the *very* act, on this *very* spot, the *very* thing I was going to say, this is the *very* man I want, to cut to the *very* bone, the house shook to its *very* foundations»:

Taking the last sentence, we may say that in it the purely grammatical function of *very* is to emphasize the fact that the house shook to its foundations: the adjective *very*

performs the function of an adverb of asseveration; and so in the other examples given above.

So much for the gradual process by which the adjective *very* has come to be an «empty» word in most of the cases in which it is used in Mod. E.

It is easy to see that a word which at so early a period was on its way to become an «empty» word, was especially adapted for being used as a colourless intensive.

The sense-weakening in adverbs to which I have drawn attention in my introductory chapter, has also taken place in the case of the adverb *very*. The original sense of the adjective does not, strictly speaking, admit of variation; hence its use as an adverb to express the absoluteness of a quality: in other words, the adverb *very*, which came into use as a mere intensive in the course of the sixteenth century, originally meant «completely, absolutely, quite». But it very soon came to be used in the weakened sense of «to a high degree», which is its usual force in Mod. E. So far as I can see, the old sense is in Mod. E. preserved only in the use of *very* before superlatives: «the *very* first, the *very* last, the *very* next, the *very* same, the *very* best husband in the world, the *very* oldest of them»; but it may be exemplified from Shakespeare's works in cases in which Mod. E. no longer uses it; e. g. Othello I 1, 88: «Now, *very* now, an old black ram is tupping your white ewe». — Lear V 3, 294: «He knows not what he says, and vain is it That we present us to him. — Edgar. *Very* bootless». — Meas. for Meas. IV 3, 40; «Is the axe upon the block, sirrah? — *Very* ready, sir».

*Very*, being an intensive expressing the high degree of a quality, is used only before adjectives and adverbs; before passive participles we now employ *very much*. Only

in cases where a passive participle has totally stripped off its verbal character, do we sometimes find *very* used before it. Thus, in contemporary English, we may find *very* before *pleased*, *satisfied*, *contented*, *frightened*, etc. e. g. Punch, 1883, Vol. I (Vol. 84), 263<sup>a</sup>: «I am sure I should be *very pleased*», replied the Governor, hastily<sup>1</sup>).

In spoken English particular prominence is given to the adverb *very* by isolating it from the adjective it modifies, by means of postposition; e. g. Punch, 1875, Vol. I, 207<sup>b</sup>: «Her name is Ethel. Pretty. She is not a bit *posé*<sup>2</sup>) or loud. Never thought she was. She is clever, *very*»; Punch, 1882, Vol. II (Vol. 83), 90<sup>a</sup>: «Tantalising — *very!*» [Three young ladies hidden from view by three large parasols.] Thackeray, Philip, 116: «Father was a handsome man — *very*. Quite a lady-killer. — I meant out of his practice» [referring to Dr. Firmin]. —

If *very* is the intensive par excellence in Mod. English, *right*, which was extensively employed in the same function especially in Early Mod. E., now lives in cultured speech only as a conscious archaism, and in certain standing phrases.

In Old English the adverb *rihte* was used in the senses «rightly» and «exactly», but I do not find it employed as an intensive before adjectives and adverbs.

<sup>1</sup> In Mod. E. *to be pleased* means «to be glad»; but the phrase also used to mean «to deign, to vouchsafe, to please (= Germ. *geruhen*), to condescend», a sense which is frequent in Shakespeare, but is archaic now. Hence the discontinuance of the once common «Friends at a distance will *be pleased* to accept of this intimation», appended to an obituary notice or advertisement.

<sup>2</sup> To be *posé* = to pose. The Dutch «*geposeerd zijn*» is in English given by «to be staid, sober, steady». Note that «she is *posé*», like *nom de plume* and *double-entendre*, is English-French. The French phrase is, «*Cette femme pose toujours*».



The oldest instances known to me of *right* as an intensive are in Piers the Plowman, where *right* occurs before adjectives and adverbs, a) with the sense of «exactly, completely, in the fullest sense of the word», marking completeness of a quality; and b) with the sense of the modern *very*, marking a high degree of a quality. Of both senses I subjoin examples:

a) P. the Pl., B X 297: *Rigt* so, quod Gregorie, religion roileth, Sterueth and stynketh and steleth lordes almesses, That oute of couent and cloystre coneyten to libbe. — Ibid. C II 157: as the meyere is bytwyne the kyng and the comune, *Rygt* so is loue a ledere and the lawe shapeth.

b) Ibid. C, XXI 220: For sholde neuere *right* riche man that lyueth in reste and hele Ywyte what wo is, ne were the deth of kynde. — Ibid. B XI 259: And lasse he (i. e. the poor man) dredeth deth and in derke to be robbed Than he that is *rygte* ryche, resoun bereth wytnesse. — Richard the Redeless (ed. Skeat), prol. 16: [They] amarride my mynde *rith* moche and my wittis eke.

Exactly parallel with the use of the adjectives *pure* and *fine* exemplified on pp. 16—18, is the use of the adjective *right* (= Mod. E. *very*) in the following passages from Piers the Plowman: C, XIX 290: with that ich seyh an other Rappliche renne the *righte* (= very, same) wey we wente; B XVII 48: Thanne seye we a Samaritan, sittende on a mule, Rydyngge ful rapely the *rigt* weye we zeden.

In Chaucer's works *right* before adverbs in the majority of cases means «exactly, just», e. g. C. Tales, B 2171: al were it so that she *right* now were deed; *ibid.* F 1614: As thou *right* now were copen out of the ground.

Before adjectives I find *not right* used by Chaucer in the same ironical way in which *not exactly* is sometimes used

in Mod. E. to express a strong negation (he is not exactly a scholar = he is a dunce): C. Tales, Prologue 287: As lene was his hors as is a rake, And he (the Clerk of Oxenford) nas nat *right* fat, I undertake.

Not before the fifteenth century do I find *right* regularly used as an intensive before adjectives and adverbs, such as I have exemplified it from Langland's works in *right rich* and *right much*. Its introduction may be due to Scandinavian through Northern influence, *rätt* being still a very frequent intensive in Swedish.

I subjoin a number of fifteenth century examples of *right* = «very», before adjectives and adverbs; they are most of them taken from the texts given in Skeat's Specimens of Engl. Literature, 1394—1579 (Spec. III).

Reginald Pecock, The Repressor (1449), pt. II, ch. 11 (Spec. III 52): «Pat *riȝt* *synguler* avauntagis of remembring comen bi ymagis & pilgrimagis . . . , I proue þus». Id. *ibid.* (Spec. III 55): «wherfore *riȝt* greet special commoditees & profitis into remembraunce-making ymagis & pilgrimagis han & doon». Henry the Minstrel, Wallace, bk. I, l. 184 (p. 58): «For he was wyss, *rycht* *worthy*, wicht, and kynd». Id., *ibid.* l. 339 (p. 63): «zonge he was, and to sothroun *rycht* *sauage*». Id. *ibid.* l. 423 (p. 65): «zour men ar martyrit down, *Rycht* *cruelly*, her in this fals regioun». Malory, Le Morte Arthur, bk. XXI, ch. 4 (p. 81): «thys unhappy day ye shalle be *ryght* *wel* reuengyd upon hym». William Dunbar, The Thrissill and the Rois, st. 14 (p. 112): «*Rycht* *strong* of corpis, of fassoun fair, but feir». Stephen Hawes, Passetyme of Pleasure, ch. XXXIII, st. 16 (p. 122): «But he my strokes might *right* *well* endure». Id. *ibid.* st. 18 (p. 123): «He was *right* *hye* and I under him low . . . Upon the side I gave him such a blow, That I *right* *nere* did him overthrow».

Id. *ibid.* st. 19: «And thus the battayll dured *right longe*». Id. *ibid.* st. 22 (p. 124): «To me come ryding thre ladyes *right swete*». Lord Berners, Froissart, ch. I (p. 157): «This batayle was *right fierse* and terryble». Id. *ibid.* (p. 158): [They] «were *ryght good* and expert men of warre». Id. *ibid.* ch. CXXX (p. 163): «This batayle . . . was *ryght cruell* and fell». Sir Thomas Elyot, The Governor, Bk. I, ch. XVII (p. 196): «There is an exercise, which is *right profitable* in extreme daunger of warres». Id. *ibid.* (p. 201): «There is also a *ryght good* exercise, which is also expedient to lerne». Id., *ibid.* ch. XVIII (p. 203): «Huntyng of the hare with grehoundes is a *righte good* solace for men that be studiouse». Id. *ibid.* (p. 204): «it is *right likely* that within a shorte space of yeres, our familiar pultrie shall be as scarce as be now partriche and fesaunt». — Udall, Roister Doister IV 2 (ed. Arber, p. 60): «Forsoth *right welcome* ye be». Id. *ibid.* III 4 (ed. Arber, p. 53): «I warrant hir soone *right glad* to seeke to you»; with which cf. on p. 51: «When ye are sory, I will be *very gladd*».

In Shakespeare's works the intensive *right* is of frequent occurrence. Schmidt's Shakespeare Lexicon gives *right gracious*, *right true*, *right fair*, *right glad*, *right suddenly*, etc. etc.

The Authorised Version has *right early* (Ps. 46, 5), *right well* (Ps. 139, 14). In Ps. 30, 8, the Prayer-Book version has: [I] «gat me to my Lord *right humbly*».

In the English of our day *right* as an intensive is regularly used only in certain titles, such as *Right Honorable*, *Right Reverend*, *Right Worshipful*. It is worth noting that *Right Reverend* is the style of a dean of the Anglican Church, *Very Reverend* of a bishop, and *Most Reverend* of an archbishop.

In other cases, the intensive *right* usually figures as a conscious archaism, e. g. Rev. of Reviews, July 15, 1897, 9<sup>b</sup>: «The Indian Government will have to decide, and that *right soon*, whether or not it is worth while», etc. Ibid. Oct. 15, 1897, 331<sup>b</sup>: «unless something can be done, and that *right quickly*». Literary World, April 4, 1899, 343<sup>a</sup>: «a millionaire who spent his money *right royally* and philanthropically». Punch, 1879, Vol. II (Vol. 77), 165<sup>a</sup>: «*Right* few people perhaps are aware of the existence of the *rus in urbe*», etc.

#### IV. Quite.

We have seen that a few instances of *very* in the sense of «completely, absolutely, wholly» occur in Shakespeare, but that Mod. E. has preserved this sense of *very* before superlatives only.

Even in Shakespeare, however, in the great majority of cases the function of expressing completeness or absoluteness of a quality, or the very highest degree of which a quality is capable, is undertaken by the adverb *quite*.

Whatever may be the etymology of the Romance adjective *quit*<sup>1</sup>, so much is sure that it was introduced into ME. at an early period, with the sense of 'freed, released, discharged (from)'. According to Skeat, Etym. Dict., it appears in the Ancren Riwe (ab. 1230), p. 6, l. 12, as *cwite*, and Robert of Gloucester, p. 392, has: «Tho was Willam our kyng all *quyt* of thulke fon (= foes)». The ME. adjective *quyte*, now spelt *quit* (*quits*, as in to be *quits* with

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<sup>1</sup> «The etymology of the Late Latin and generally Romance *quittus*, 'quit', Dutch 'kwijt', has not as yet been found» (Franck, Etymol. Wdb. der Nederl. Taal, i. v. *kwijt*).

a person»)<sup>1</sup>, was also used adverbially in the sense of 'so as to be completely rid (of them)'; e. g. Rob. of Brunne's Langtoft, p. 50 (Skeat): «And chaced him out of Norweie *quyte* and clene».

Just as *clean*, from meaning 'freed from impurities', has come to be a mere intensive with the sense of 'completely', as, for example, in the Shakespearean phrases '*clean* from the purpose', '*clean* contrary', so the ME. adjective *quite*, in exactly the same way, from expressing a state of being completely released from a person or thing, has come to be used as an adverb of intensity with the sense of 'completely, entirely'. In this sense Chaucer uses the form *quitly*, but so far as I can find out from Skeat's Glossarial Index, in one passage only, viz. Canterb. Tales, Group A 1791—2 (Knights Tale): «Lo heer, this Arcite and this Palamon, That *quitly* weren out of my prisoun», where the notion of release is still clearly present.

In the non-Chaucerian part of the Romaunt of the Rose we have in B 2375 the adjective *quyte* in the sense of 'entire, perfect': «Therefore yeve it hool and *quyte*», and the adverb *quitly* in the sense of 'quite, entirely', C 5843: «Ne yit is not thriven so That he hath gotten a peny or two, That *quitly* is his own in hold'».

<sup>1</sup> The spelling *quite* of the adjective is met with in XVI century authors, e. g. Robinson, Translation of More's Utopia (ed. Arber), p. 48: And the tribute whiche they paye to their chiefe lord and kinge, setteth them *quite* and free from warfare; Tottel's Miscellany (1557; ed. Arber), p. 62: Yet of my wo I can not so be *quite*. — The adjective does not occur in Shakespeare; it is spelt *quit* in the Auth. Version; Joshua 2, 20: «Then we will be *quit* of thine oath which thou hast made us to swear»; and in Milton: Par. Lost VI 548: *quit* of all impediment, Instant without disturb they took alarm, And onward move embattel'd; ibid. XI 548: bent rather, how I may be *quit*, Fairest and easiest, of this cumbrous charge.



According to Al. Schmidt's *Shakespeare Lexicon*, the only sense in which the adverb *quite* occurs in Shakespeare, is 'completely'<sup>1</sup>. Reference to Cruden's *Concordance* shows that this is also the exclusive sense in which the word is found in the *Authorised Version*; and after looking up all the references in that provokingly curt performance, *Cleveland's Concordance to Milton's Poetical Works*, I can say that, so far as this book is to be relied on, in Milton's poetry also, *quite* invariably means 'completely, entirely'.

Guy Miegé's *Dictionary* (1679) has: «*Quite, quite and clean, tout à fait, entièrement, absolument*»; and Johnson's *Dictionary*, too, registers the adverb *quite* in one sense only, viz. "completely; perfectly; totally; entirely".

In the course of the eighteenth century, however, the adverb *quite* developed a new shade of meaning, or rather, had an additional function imposed on it, about which some erroneous notions have found their way into certain of our best dictionaries.

This new function is perhaps best characterized by stating that, from having up to that time been exclusively employed as a word-modifier, it now began to be used as a sentence-modifier also.

In the sentence «I *certainly* know that the plan has failed», *certainly* is a sentence-modifier; but if we put *certainly* after *know* in the same sentence, *certainly* becomes a word-modifier, and the meaning of the whole becomes perceptibly different. In the second case, *certainly* modifies *know*, and the meaning is, «I know with certainty»;

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<sup>1</sup> It is a great pity that the plan of Mrs. Cowden Clarke's *Shakespeare Concordance* excludes such common adverbs as *quite*. This circumstance renders the book in many cases quite useless for the purposes of grammatical research.



in the first case, *certainly* is an adverb of asseveration, modifying the relation between subject and predicate, i. e. the general meaning of the sentence. In other words, «I certainly know» means, «I readily admit as certain, that I know», etc.

All adverbs of assertion (affirmation, denial, asseveration, certainty, doubt, etc.) can, as such, be sentence-modifiers only, because affirmation, denial, etc. consist in stating a certain relation between the subject and the predicate of a sentence. But, as we have just seen in the case of *certainly*, some adverbs of asseveration may also be used as adverbs of manner, in which case they become word-modifiers. Thus, to take another example, in «He cometh not, she said», *not* is a sentence-modifier, whereas it is a word-modifier in «He loved *not* wisely, but too well».

If we read out the two sentences, «I certainly know that the plan has failed», and, «I know certainly that, etc.», we find that in the first the sentence-modifying *certainly* has weak stress, as compared with the strong-stressed *know*; while in the second sentence the word-modifier *certainly* is strong-stressed as against the weak-stressed *know*. We can make the same observation when comparing such pairs of sentences as «He *wisely* abstained from interfering between them,» and «He acted *wisely* in whatever he undertook»; «If you *at all* doubt my statements, say so»; and «It's better than nothing *at all*».

Thus in the stronger or weaker stress we have a useful test to distinguish between word-modification and sentence-modification. At the same time it is important to observe that, in certain cases, sentence-modifiers may get strong stress too. For rhetorical reasons, for instance, in the sentence just given, *He wisely abstained from interfering*

*between them*, 'wisely', though a sentence-modifier, may be uttered with strong stress, if for purposes of strong asseveration or contradiction we wish to emphasize the fact, that we think his act a wise one, whatever others may think of it.

Another test is furnished by the place of the adverb in a sentence. Adverbs that modify full verbs always follow the verb; adverbs that modify adjectives or adverbs as a rule precede the word they determine. Where, accordingly, we find an adverb before a full verb, or after an adjective, adverb or noun, the presumption is, that the adverb is a sentence-modifier. Thus, in «I saw him *only* yesterday» = «I saw him no longer ago than yesterday», *only* modifies *yesterday*, and is therefore a word-modifier. But in «I *only* saw him yesterday» = «I did not see him before yesterday» *only* is a sentence-modifier.

Now, in the case of *quite*, I find that down to the early years of the eighteenth century, it was used as a word-modifier exclusively, whereas from that time downward it is found used as a sentence-modifier also. From the beginning of the eighteenth century we find both a weak- and a strong-stressed *quite*, the strong form retaining the sense of 'completely', and the function of a word-modifier, the weak sentence-modifying form expressing a modal modification which it is not easy to define.

In the sentence «the ink is *quite* dry», the strong-stressed word-modifier *quite* means 'completely, entirely'; but if we say to a person who has just come in, «You are *quite* wet, I declare; I didn't know it was raining», the adverb *quite* is not strong-, but weak-stressed, *wet* getting the stronger stress; nor does *quite* mean 'completely', or even 'very', as some dictionaries will have it.

The function of weak-stressed *quite*, as exemplified in «You are *quite* wet, I declare!», is a modal one, and *quite* does not in any way modify the meaning of *wet*.

The dictionaries, with one exception, to be referred to *infra*, are of little use in helping us to determine in what this modal function consists. Webster i. v. *quite* mentions as the second meaning of the adverb *quite*: «To a great extent or degree; very; considerably; as, *quite* young», and adds: «Common in America, and not unfrequent in England».

The second American lexicographer of note, Joseph E. Worcester, expresses himself to the same effect: «(*Quite*) is often used, in this country, in the sense of *very*; as, '*quite* warm', '*quite* cold'; and it is sometimes so used by English writers; as '*quite* recent' (Eccles. Rev.); '*quite* extraordinary' (Mc Culloch)».

Towards the middle of the century now drawing to its close, there was a strong impression abroad, of course favoured by these statements of American lexicographers, that the so-called «new» sense of *quite*, referred to and exemplified in the above quotations, hailed from the United States, and for this reason had better be avoided.

Even the Century Dictionary (1889—1891), gives as the second meaning of *quite*: «To a considerable extent or degree; noticeably: as, *quite* warm; *quite* pretty; *quite* clever; *quite* an artist», and adds: «in this sense now chiefly colloquial and American». Example: «The lithographer has done his work *quite*, though hardly very, well». This hardly differs from what Webster and Worcester had said half a century earlier. A writer in Blackwood's Magazine, October, 1867, says that «this vague meaning, the misapplication of a good word, has lately become very

common in England, an eminent Member of Parliament declaring that an event had happened *quite* recently, and another that *quite* a number of people assembled in Trafalgar Square. Such phrases as *quite* warm, *quite* extraordinary, are heard every day, and are sometimes inadvertently employed by writers of otherwise irreproachable English».

In *Punch*, 1862, Vol. I, 133b, in an article on «More American Slang», the writer *inter alia* refers to «the genuine adverb *quite*, ridiculously used as an adjective (*sic*); as in 'quite a number', meaning a large number».

Flügel (1891) i. v. *quite*, tells us that in *The Athenaeum*, March 1869, 372, phrases such as '*quite* creditable', '*quite* large flocks', '*quite* an interesting account', are branded as 'Californianisms', in which *quite* has needlessly usurped the place of *very*.

Dr. Fitzedward Hall, in his invaluable book *Modern English*, p. 51, quotes from Arthur Hugh Clough's *Poems and Prose Remains* (1869), I 219, a passage in which there is the same persistent reference to the supposed American origin of the use of *quite* we are discussing: «Did you see *The Examiner* on Mrs. Stowe's *Sunny Memories*? (publ. 1859). *Quite* a severe article; and *quite* unnecessarily so, I should say. The use of *quite* is a peculiarity which I *quite* remarked myself; but I think you have *quite* a right to use it, as a substitute, if you please, for our less exact 'very'; and, in colloquial writing, no one ought to object. I don't see that the old-country English are to have the exclusive right of introducing new expressions».

On this passage, Dr. F. Hall, who is always eminently worth listening to, comments as follows: «Thus wrote Mr. Arthur Hugh Clough, though the uses of *quite* which he

exemplifies — save, perhaps, in the phrase ‘I *quite* remarked’, — have been English for considerably upwards of a hundred years. Nor is *quite*, in any of his instances, exactly equivalent, as he intimates it is, to ‘very’. As to ‘*quite* a severe article’, it is not very long ago that such a collocation of words, to mean what it means above, was unknown. There, as in some other positions, *quite* often holds, in signification, a place intermediate between ‘altogether’, and ‘somewhat’.

And in a note to this passage from Modern English, the erudite author gives *more suo* an astounding wealth of eighteenth century illustration in support of his thesis that ‘*quite* recently’, ‘*quite* a number’, etc. are not Americanisms, but are part and parcel of what Dr. Hall styles ‘our grandfathers’ English’.

Taught by Dr. Hall, Richard Grant White, Words and their Uses, 3rd Ed. (1881), p. 148, rejects the theory of the American origin of the modal use of *quite*, but is otherwise dogmatical enough in his condemnation of it. «Therefore», says Grant White *ex cathedra*, «the common phrase, miscalled an Americanism, *quite a number*, is unjustifiable. A cup or a theatre may be *quite* full; and there may be *quite* a pint in the cup, or *quite* a thousand people in the theatre, and neither may be *quite* full. But *number* is indefinite in its signification, and therefore cannot properly be qualified by *quite*. Yet Thomas Hughes, whom we all think of as Tom Brown, in his letter about the Oxford and Harvard boat race, spoke of ‘*quite* a number of young Americans’.»

Undeterred, however, by Grant White’s reasoning, another American, the eminent philologist Prof. Whitney, in his Elements of English Grammar, p. 252, writes: «*Quite*



a number [of verbs], ending in *t* or *d*, generally after a short vowel, make no change at all».

The earliest example in point of time that I have met with, of a phrase analogous to '*quite* a number', is by Dr. F. Hall cited from Richardson's *Pamela* (ed. 1811), vol. I, p. 86, and as it is important to have the whole context, I give the passage at length: «And he laughed and I snatched my hand from him, and I tripp'd away as fast as I could. Ah! thought I, marry'd? I'm sure 't is time you were marry'd, or at any rate no honest maiden ought to live with you. Why, dear Father and Mother, to be sure he grows *quite* a rake! How easy it is to grow from bad to worse, when once people give way to vice! How would my poor Lady, had she liv'd, have griev'd to see it! But maybe he would have been better then!»

In view of this passage we may, I think, conclude that this new function of *quite*, which we first find in eighteenth century authors, is not an Americanism, and that *quite* in this function cannot properly be replaced by 'very, to a great degree or extent', as Webster and Worcester, and, for the matter of that, also Cassell's *Encycl. Dict.*, and even the *Century Dictionary* will have it.

Let us now try to determine what is the precise modal function of weak-stressed *quite* in such a sentence as, «You are *quite* wet, I declare!»

Among the numerous illustrative quotations bearing on this point, collected by Dr. Hall, I find one taken from Walter Savage Landor, *The Last Fruit off an Old Tree*, p. 230, which may help to put us in the way of realising what *quite* in such cases really implies. At this reference the author mentions «a wolf, who was *quite* charming». It is evident that for this *quite* we cannot substitute either

'very', or 'completely': so far as I can see the English word that would most closely represent the function of *quite* in Landor's sentence, is the adverb *actually*.

In the New English Dictionary Dr. Murray observes i. v. *actually*, that in certain cases it is not «said of the objective reality of the thing asserted, but as to the truthfulness of the assertion and its correspondence with the thing; hence [it is] added to vouch for statements which seem surprising, incredible, or exaggerated: 'He has *actually* sent the letter after all'».

In certain cases, therefore, *actually* is a modal adverb, intended to emphasize the truth of a statement which it at the same time characterizes as something out of the common experience.

Now the following illustrations will clearly show that the function of *actually*, as defined by Dr. Murray, is also the function of Modern English *quite*, in cases in which it is not a strong-stressed word-modifier meaning 'completely, entirely'.

Flügel — by the way the only lexicographer known to me who has felt that the modal function of *quite* cannot be represented by the substitution of *very*, *very much*, etc. — gives the following highly instructive illustration from that master of cultured spoken English, Anthony Trollope: «'I do hear that she [= your daughter] has been *quite* admired' . . . It was too hard, to be told, after that [*scil.* great triumphs as the belle of the Season], that her daughter had been 'quite admired'».

Here, *very much*, instead of *quite*, would produce a *contresens*; and *completely*, or *altogether*, are directly felt to be inadequate to express the sense intended by the writer. In this quotation the use of *quite*, marks the condescending, half-sneering tone in which the words are uttered. In ac-

cordance with what I have defined higher up as the modal function of *quite*, the speaker's meaning may be paraphrased somewhat after this fashion: «I do hear [note the surprise implied in the use of the emphatic do] that (contrary to my expectation) people have gone so far as to offer your daughter nothing short of admiration»; or: «However unwillingly, I feel bound to admit that, improbable as it might have appeared beforehand, your daughter has been actually admired, and nothing less»; or: «The incredible has actually taken place: your daughter has been admired».

With regard to this passage from Trollope's *Framley Parsonage* I 258 (Tauchn.), Flügel observes, that in it *quite* is by no means equivalent to *very much*, but expresses «gleichsam nicht unbedingte, mehr vorsichtige Behauptung»: the praise here given to the young lady in question, is by him referred to as «das als dürftig und beleidigend aufgefaßte Lob einer entschiedenen Schönheit», and as the German equivalent for 'quite admired', he gives «förmlich bewundert».

Storm, *Englische Philologie* <sup>2</sup> I 841, expresses himself to much the same effect: «Wendungen wie 'I declare, you are growing *quite* witty' (Bulwer), sind also nicht buchstäblich zu verstehen. Einen Mann '*quite* an educated person' zu nennen würde in England 'be anything but a compliment'; und ich habe nicht finden können, daß es in Amerika anders gebraucht wird. Vgl. d. ein *recht* gebildeter Mann, ein *ganz* wohlerzogener Mensch.»

The passage from *Framley Parsonage*, above discussed, is instructive, in that it clearly shows, first, how a word meaning 'completely' has come to have a modal function conferred upon it; and secondly, how easily the general modal function of *quite* may get specialised into that of expressing sneering sarcasm, or half-contemptuous irony. In fact, if

we ostentatiously emphasize the truth of a statement that predicates something favourable of a person, and at the same time characterize this statement as something surprising, or seldom heard of, the drift of the whole is far more akin to sarcasm than to flattery.

What, indeed, must be a man's feelings, when, after a post-prandial speech to which he has brought all the resources of his wit and his imagination, some well-meaning but candid old friend so far presumes on the privilege of familiar acquaintance as to address him with «I declare, you are growing *quite* witty» (Bulwer).

If, in Dickens's Christmas Carol, young Scrooge says to his sister, who has come to take him home from the boarding-school: «You are *quite* a woman, little Fan!» the substratum is the boy's astonishment at finding his sister so much grown since the time of their last meeting. If, in the same story, old Scrooge says to his nephew, after the latter's burst of eloquence on the subject of Christmas: «You're *quite* a powerful speaker, Sir. I wonder you don't go into Parliament», every reader must feel the sneer implied in the use of *quite*, a sarcasm which the adverbs *very* or *altogether* would utterly fail to convey: «You are a powerful speaker, which is more than any one would have expected of you».

The genuine astonishment of the boy, implied in the *quite* of the first of these quotations from the Christmas Carol, would in Dutch be expressed by: «Je bent een *heele* dame geworden!» = German: «Du bist ja eine *förmliche* Dame geworden!» and the sneer conveyed in the second, might in Dutch be rendered by the use of the ironical adverbs *bepaald* or *gedecideerd*: «Je bent *bepaald* een kranig spreker!» just as the after-dinner orator above referred to

might under the circumstances be greeted with: «Je wordt bepaald geestig, moet ik zeggen!» = Germ. «Sie fangen ja an förmlich witzig zu werden!»

In the same way, if we say of a performance by amateur actors: «It was really *quite* amusing», the substratum is: It is altogether surprising that those ladies and gentlemen should at all have managed to produce something presentable and even amusing»; or: «However unpromising such a performance may have seemed *a priori*, the actors actually contrived to be amusing»; a sense that in German might be rendered by: «Es war faktisch entschieden unterhaltend»; and how far this is removed from what is expressed by, «It was really *very* amusing», I leave every one who understands German and English to judge.

To say of a performance that «it was really *quite* amusing», of a man's speech that «it was *quite* witty», of a young lady that «she has been *quite* admired», is, to quote Pope's attack on Atticus-Addison, to

«Damn with faint praise, assent with civil leer,  
And without sneering, teach the rest to sneer.  
Willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike,  
Just hint a fault, and hesitate dislike».

Neither Flügel nor Prof. Storm, as quoted *supra*, would seem to have fully realised the modal nature of the function of *quite* in cases like those we have been discussing. Nor has Dr. Fitzedward Hall, to whose reading this chapter is so largely indebted, completely succeeded in clearly explaining the function of «modal» *quite*. In a note on p. 54 of Modern English he says: «Instead of 'quite a rake', the old English expression was 'a great rake', which does not go so far as 'altogether a rake', or, 'a perfect rake'».

In the quotation from Pamela, given on p. 46, *quite*



*a rake*, so far as I can see, does not exactly mean «a great rake», as Dr. Hall will have it. By using the phrase *quite a rake*, Pamela wants to give expression to her feeling of indignant surprise at finding her young master so different from what he used to be.

As little, to my thinking, does Dr. Hall manage to hit the mark in what he goes on to say in the same note: «Such a *quite a* [as we have in *quite a rake*] may, generally, be replaced by *a great, much of a*, or by something less intensive than *a complete, a full, a thorough*, or the like. *Quite*, as, for instance in Richardson's '*quite displeased*', also imports less than '*entirely*', '*thoroughly*', '*fully*'. *Very much* may, in some cases, represent its force; in other cases, *very*».

I have sometimes wondered that so acute an observer of English usage as Dr. Fitzedward Hall, should have failed to see that in almost all the instances of the «modal» use of *quite* which he has collected from XVIII and XIX century authors, the adverb *actually* would express almost exactly the same shade of sentence-modification that *quite* does.

Having thus pointed out what to me seems the real force of the adverb *quite* in cases where it does not mean '*completely*', '*entirely*', I now proceed to illustrate this function of the adverb by a selection of quotations from XVIII and XIX century English, therein largely availing myself of the illustrative matter furnished by Dr. Fitzedward Hall.

I shall first give examples in which it is only the note of the '*incredible, surprising, or exaggerated*', that is struck; i. e. cases in which there is no perceptible undercurrent of sarcastic innuendo. Let the reader observe that in all the passages about to be cited, *actually* would practically cover the same ground that *quite* does.

The letter from Pamela to her parents from which I have quoted on p. 46, ends as follows: «For you see by my sad story, and narrow escapes, what hardships poor maidens go thro', whose lot it is to go to service; especially to houses where there is not the fear of God, and good rule kept by the heads of the family. You see I am *quite* grown grave and serious; indeed it becomes the present condition of, Your Dutiful Daughter». — The subaudition in the last sentence is, of course: «though you may well be surprised to read such serious sentiments coming from so young a person».

A characteristic illustration is Landor's phrase already referred to, «a wolf who was *quite* charming» (see p. 46). Who, indeed, would not be surprised at finding a wolf described as «charming»?

In Johnson's *Rambler*, No. 84, a young lady of sixteen complains of the tyranny of her aunt, «who is resolved to try who will [shall?] govern, and will thwart my humour till she breaks my spirit. These menaces, Mr. Rambler, sometimes make me *quite* angry; for I have been sixteen these ten weeks, and think myself exempted from the dominion of a governess who has no pretensions to more sense or knowledge than myself». — Here the subaudition implied in *quite* is: «though you may find it hard to believe that such ridiculous assumption of authority could have power to ruffle my temper».

Dr. Hall shrewdly observes on p. 54, Note, of 'Modern English': «It is, I suspect, to the ladies that we are indebted, originally, for the uses of *quite* here exemplified», and I, for one, feel strongly inclined to agree with him, oblique intimation, where «more is meant than meets the ear», being notoriously a mode of speech in great favour with the sex.

«(The planet) Mars . . . throws *quite* a lustre on the waves», writes Miss Carter to Miss Talbot in 1766 (Miss Carter's Letters to Miss Talbot, Vol. III, p. 300), thus emphasizing her sense of astonishment at finding a single star to have so much luminous power.

«I am *quite* interested in the fate of your favourite trees», writes Miss Talbot to Miss Carter in 1745 (Ibid. I 109) the subaudition being: «though you may hardly have given me credit for so much interest in your essays in arboriculture».

«There will be *quite* a knot of nobility in the neighbourhood this autumn» (Miss Carter, Letters to Mrs. Montague III 168). — Here it is modestly implied that the writer's neighbourhood is a somewhat unlikely spot for having a «knot of nobility» congregated in it.

«He took care to engage my attention by some interesting discourse, assuring me, as often as I attempted to move, that it was *quite* early» (Edw. Moore, The World, No. 97; 1754). — Dutch: «Heusch nog niet laat, geloof me!» Germ.: «Es ist faktisch noch ganz früh!»

Goldsmith, Vicar of Wakefield, ch. 21: «So that [Mr. Thornhill] left me *quite* pleased with the interest he seemed to take in my concerns». Here, of course, *pleased* refers to *me*, and the implication is: «Whatever the reader may think of my credulity and want of penetration in not having seen through Mr. Thornhill's character by this time». This delicate trait, in exact keeping with the guileless Dr. Primrose's ingenuous character, would have been lost, if Goldsmith had written 'very much', instead of «'quite' pleased».

«There was a mill in this vale, *quite* a comfortable dwelling» (Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey I 84) — which you would not have expected a mill in such

a place to be. — Say 'a *very* comfortable dwelling' instead, and the peculiar subjective colouring of the sentence disappears with the word which imparted it.

«The thought . . . makes me *quite* dread the return of the Sunday» (Dr. Arnold, *Life and Correspondence*, p. 4) — which is certainly a somewhat startling confession for a clergyman to make.

On p. 61 of the same book: «The vale of Florence looks *quite* poor and dull» — which seems a strange thing to say of Valdarno.

Miss Burney, *Evelina*, 16 (ed. 1824): «It is *quite* amusing to walk about and see the general confusion».

Byron, *Don Juan* I 80:

«Such love is innocent, and may exist  
Between young persons without any danger:  
A hand may first, and then a lip be kist;  
For my part, to such doings I'm a stranger,  
But hear these freedoms form the utmost list  
Of all o'er which such love may be a ranger:  
If people go beyond, 't is *quite a crime*,  
But not my fault — I tell them all in time».

Id. *ibid.* I 66:

Julia was — yet I never could see why —  
With Donna Inez *quite a favourite friend*;  
Between their tastes there was small sympathy,  
For not a line had Julia ever penn'd.

Academy, Aug. 27, 1898, 203<sup>a</sup>: «There is *quite a large number* of English books in the library» [of the king of Belgium]. Dickens, *Chuzzlewit*, 69<sup>b</sup> (Househ. Ed.): «You're *quite a quiz*, I do declare!» Academy, April 23, 1898, 447<sup>a</sup>: «It is *quite a question* whether an author ought to be allowed to spring seven distinct plays on the public in the way that Mr. Bernard Shaw has just done». Dickens, *Chuzzlewit*, 69<sup>b</sup> (Househ. Ed.): «She declared she was *quite*

*afraid* of her, that she was». Id. *ibid.* 106<sup>b</sup>: «Upon my word, if I thought you were falling among bad companions, I should be *quite wretched*». Id. *ibid.* 113<sup>b</sup>: «It was *quite late* in the afternoon when she awoke». Id. *ibid.* 134<sup>a</sup>: «All this was so extremely kind and hospitable that Martin, though it was *quite early* in the morning, readily acquiesced». Id. *ibid.* 186<sup>b</sup>: «You 're *quite a public man* I calc'late». Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 81<sup>b</sup> (Househ. Ed.): «Dear me! It's *quite a story*, and shall be saved till dinner-time». Id. *ibid.* 85<sup>b</sup>: «Yet, having already made his fortune in his own mind, he was so unassuming with it that I felt *quite grateful* to him for not being puffed up». Good Words, 1887, 346<sup>b</sup>: «I *quite* expect to find a place as organist in some London church before long». Punch, Aug. 13, 1898, 70: This morning a single-handed negro-entertainer gave his performance on the sands to *quite five* people».

After this it is easy to see that such a sentence as, «He is quite a gentleman», may have two widely different meanings, according as *quite* is weak- or strong-stressed.

With *quite* strong-stressed, which involves weak stress on *gentleman*, the sentence means: «He is a perfect gentleman», and *quite* is a word-modifier.

With *quite* weak-, and *gentleman* strong-stressed, «He is quite a gentleman», expresses the speaker's astonishment at finding a man like this to make the impression of a gentleman, and a half-doubt on the speaker's part as to the genuineness of the man's pretensions. The Dutch translation would have to run: «Hij is een heele heer»; Germ.: «Er sieht wirklich ganz fein aus». In this case *quite* is a sentence-modifier.



Prof. Storm, *Engl. Philologie*<sup>2</sup>, pp. 841 and 1040, admits that «He is *quite* a gentleman» may have two different meanings, but would seem not to have noticed that in spoken English the distinction is marked by the difference of stress just referred to. On p. 1040 of his book he says: «*Quite a gentleman* kann im Engl. sowohl im buchstäblichen, eigentlichen Sinn als (noch häufiger) im übertragenen, ironischen gebraucht werden. Es kann also sein = a *thorough gentleman*, ist aber nicht so deutlich [als a *thorough gentleman*]. So z. B. Miss Edgeworth, *Early Lessons*, etc., 134: «She would spare no expense to make him [her son] *quite a gentleman*». Auch *quite the gentleman*, das oft etwas Vulgäres an sich hat. So sagt bei Yates, *The Forlorn Hope* I 134, 'a commercial gent': 'A very good fellow in his way, and *quite the gentleman*'».

In «He is *quite the gentleman*», *quite* is always a strong-stressed word-modifier; it is never used ironically, and Prof. Storm is quite right in saying that it is something of a vulgarism in Victorian English, the nearest German equivalent being, perhaps, «Er ist immer nobel». Cf., however, Carlyle, *Friedrich* (People's Ed.) II 237: For the rest, a handsome figure, prompt in French, and *much the gentleman*. Ibid. 304: Poor Eberhard Ludwig who is *infinitely the gentleman*. Ibid. IV 250: A tall aquiline type of man; *much the gentleman* in aspect. Miss Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (1836) 149: In person and address, *most truly the gentleman*. Id. *ibid.* 7: His brother-in-law, Mr. Hurst, merely *looked the gentleman*. Id. *Sense and Sensibility* (1833) 250: He is undoubtedly a sensible man, and in his manners *perfectly the gentleman*. Carlyle, *Friedrich* (ut supra) V 98: «Prince of Orange», hunchbacked, but *much the Prince*.

As regards the note of vulgarity in the phrase *quite the gentleman*, compare Thackeray, Philip, p. 151: She liked Mr. Ridley to come, for he always treated her father so respectful, and was *quite the gentleman*.

To return to our illustrations of *quite* as a sentence-modifier; a rustic who should show a marked degree of proficiency in writing and ciphering, as compared with his fellows, we might call «*quite* a scholar», with weak stress on *quite*, while his compeers would probably describe him as «no end of a schollard».

If I say, «It is *quite* cold this morning», where *quite* is necessarily weak-stressed, the implication is, that the temperature is lower than might be expected under the circumstances at this season of the year. «It is *very* cold this morning» is a matter-of-fact statement in which nothing of the kind is hinted at. This brings out clearly the difference between *quite* and *very* before adjectives.

Compare Punch, July 4, 1894, 4<sup>b</sup>: He's sprung, I believe, from *quite* the middle class». Here, what the writer wishes to suggest to his readers, is a feeling of astonishment that the person in question should have risen so high in the world.

Notes and Queries, Nov. 3, 1894, 358<sup>a</sup>: Probably *quite* a lot of people made the same not very profound, and wonderfully pseudomantic remark [*scil.* «Il n'y a plus de Pyrénées», attributed to Louis XIV, when Philip, Duke of Anjou, took possession of the Spanish throne]. — The stress is on *lot*, and by using *quite* the writer emphasizes the fact that, in his opinion, many less exalted persons may well have made the same remark at the time.

Punch, Oct. 20, 1894, 184<sup>a</sup>: «Fanny has become *quite* an expert in photography — kodaked her father the other

day in the act of trying a difficult stroke at billiards; a back view — but so clever and characteristic!» — *Quite* expresses the mother's pleased astonishment at finding her daughter an expert at photography. The writer betrays her sex by the characteristic wording of the last part of the sentence: «but so clever and characteristic!»

Punch, March 16, 1895, 121<sup>b</sup>: «I want to see my stockbroker. I have *quite* a heavy flutter<sup>1</sup> on in connection with these new Carbonate of Soda mines». — By using *quite* the speaker intimates his conviction that his interlocutor will be somewhat surprised to hear that he is dabbling in speculative mining securities.

Thackeray, Philip, 285: On this Mrs. Laura *must* break out in *quite* a petulant tone — «Oh, how stale this kind of thing is, Arthur, from a man qui veut passer pour un homme d'esprit!» — By using *quite*, Pendennis implies that a petulant tone is something very unusual with his sweet-tempered wife. Id. *ibid.* 116: «Father was a handsome man — very. *Quite* a lady-killer — I mean out of his practice». — The implication is, that it is something unusual for a middle-aged medical man to be a lady-killer.

Skeat, A Student's Pastime 381: I think I have *quite* a new light upon this curious word (scil. *theodolite*). —

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<sup>1</sup> «Flutter (slang). An attempt or 'shy' at anything; an exciting venture at betting or cards» (NED. i. v.). Here used of speculations on the Stock Exchange; very common in this application; e. g. Punch, Febr. 18, 1893, 84<sup>b</sup>: What is a *flutter*? — The performance of a financial operation with the assistance of a tossed-up halfpenny. Punch, June 18, 1892, 291<sup>c</sup>: We should imagine that the Broker had «run off» too. Your remedy is — not to speculate again. «Flutters» lead to the Gutters. Punch, 1876, II 49<sup>b</sup>: If they try it on again, I shall send in my papers [a military officer *loq.*], and go in for a *flutter* in the wine-trade.

Here Prof. Skeat modestly gives to understand that he was quite surprised to find he could throw fresh light on the origin of a word that had resisted all previous attempts at reading its riddle.

Id. *ibid.* VII: «We lived at Perry Hill, Sydenham, at that time *quite* in the country». — The statement, the writer means to say, may well surprise the present generation, who know of Perry Hill only as a part of the wilderness of houses that is called Greater London.

Id. *ibid.* 353: «The change in these words [*father, gather, mother, together*, etc.] from *d* to *th* is *quite* late». — A fact, Skeat suggests by thus expressing himself, which may well startle those who have not given much attention to late Middle and early Modern English.

In most of the preceding illustrations the nature of the statement made, excludes the idea of irony or sarcasm. But the notion of sarcastic innuendo readily comes in, where the subject of the statement is a person other than the writer or speaker.

If we say of a man, «He was *quite* a celebrity in his day», the use of *quite* implies the speaker's conviction that the man had little in him to render him worthy of such homage from his contemporaries; whereas there is no such hint in, «He was a *great* celebrity in his time».

«Why, he is *quite* an Apollo now to what he was when a boy», does not say *very* much in favour of a man's personal attractions at the present time; and «He's *quite* a Don Juan now», gives a good deal to think as to a man's *gaucherie* where ladies are concerned, in a former period of his life; an insinuation that would be lost, if we were to say, «He's a *great* Don Juan now».

«His dislike to hard work makes him *quite* ingenious in finding means to shirk it», implies that his ingenuity on other points is not much to boast of, an implication that would disappear the moment we should substitute *very* for *quite*.

What a world of sarcasm is implied in such a sentence as, «The author is getting *quite* intelligible towards the end of the book», and what disdainful condescension in, «I hear your son was *quite* complimented by his superiors on this occasion». It is worth noting at the same time that the drift of the first of the two sentences just cited, will undergo a complete change, if instead of giving weak stress to *quite* and strong stress to *intelligible*, which brings out the sarcasm of the whole, we give strong stress to *quite*, and weak stress to *intelligible*. In this case, as I have repeatedly pointed out, *quite* becomes a word-modifier, and the implication is that, though the author's intelligibility may have left something to wish for in the earlier parts of his book, no such complaint can be made against the close of it, where his meaning is quite unmistakable.

In *Punch*, Nov. 17, 1894, 229<sup>a</sup>, a fashionable lady writes to a *débutante* in society, who has been performing a part in some private theatricals, and has sent an account of the thing to her more experienced friend: «How on earth can you, or any of the other performers, know whether it was a success or not? Of course every one said it was. Quite so; who would be rude enough to say it was a failure? However, I *quite* believe you looked sweet in your pretty costume, and I wish I had been there to see the fun». — Here the use of weak-stressed *quite* before the strong-stressed *believe* is intended to lead up to the inference on the hearer's part, that the speaker or writer does not



so readily believe in the success of the young lady's acting, whatever approval may have been extended to her pretty costume.

In many of the examples given above, the place of the adverb *quite* might seem to mark it as a word-modifier (see p. 42), but, as Henry Sweet observes in his New English Grammar § 367, «Some sentence-modifying adverbs single out one particular word, although they still modify the sentence as a whole. *Even* in, «*Even* Homer sometimes nods», where *even Homer* = 'Homer himself', and *only* in «*Only* a fool would do that», are examples of such 'word-sentence-modifying', word-emphasizing adverbs. But in such a sentence as «He is *only* a common soldier» = 'he is a common soldier and nothing more than a common soldier', *only* is a word-modifying adverb».

Thus, in «I am *quite* sure of it», *quite* is a strong-stressed word-modifier, meaning 'completely', but in «Why, it's *quite* cold this morning for the time of year», *quite* is a weak-stressed word-sentence-modifier. In most cases the amount of stress is an unfailing guide to decide whether *quite* is a word-, or a sentence-modifier.

In the phrase *quite a number*, for example, which in the early part of the present chapter we have seen so unanimously and energetically condemned by Richard Grant White and other «intuitive philologists», the weak stress of *quite*, as contrasted with the strong stress on *number*, in such a sentence as Hughes's «*Quite* a number of young Americans were seen among the spectators», is quite sufficient to mark it as a sentence-modifier, the underlying notion being the writer's pleased surprise at noticing so many young Americans in the crowd, a subaudition that the matter-of-fact 'a large number' would utterly fail to convey.

Thus in the following sentence from «Notes and News» in the *Literary World*, June 25, 1897, 604<sup>b</sup>: «*Quite* a number of prominent European authors and artists figure as contributors to this work» [*scil.* an artistic and literary international collection, entitled 'Roma', to be published shortly by Messrs. Sampson Low, Marston and Co., in aid of the funds of the well-known Italian Charitable Society, 'Carità e Lavoro'] — the writer, by using the phrase «quite a number», as against «a large number», gives expression to his mixed feelings of surprise and satisfaction at finding authors of various European nationalities contributors to a work published by an English firm in aid of an Italian charitable institution.

And here we touch the reason why Modern English usage requires *quite a young lad*, as distinguished from a *quite young lad*, to give the impression of surprise on the speaker's part at finding so young a man charged, for example, with such responsibilities. If we write *a quite young lad* to express this sentence-modification, we run great risk of being imperfectly understood, because in the latter collocation, *quite* is apt to be mistaken for the strong word-modifier, which we have in «a *quite* unanswerable objection», or in such sentences as the following from the *Review of Reviews*, May 1893, 487<sup>b</sup>: «Lord Roberts has been so long away from England that is *quite* possible [i. e. possible and nothing less than possible; almost probable] that he may not adequately appreciate the extent to which public sentiment in this country is revolted by what is, to all intents and purposes, the conversion of Her Majesty's representatives into keepers of houses of ill-fame»; from *Punch*, Oct. 6, 1894, 168<sup>a</sup>: «It is really *quite* time you gave me some more of your valuable advice»; *Graphic*, Dec. 19, 1896,

770<sup>a</sup>: «It is *quite* time some energetic protest was made against the elephantine gambols of this inconsiderate brute» [viz. the «Railway Dragon»] — *quite time* in the last two passages englishing the Dutch «hoog tijd, meer dan tijd», German «die allerhöchste Zeit» —; Review of Reviews, April 1895, 356<sup>a</sup>: *Quite* one of the brightest travel papers (= *emphatically* one of etc.) that has (*sic*) appeared for some time is the first instalment of Miss Balfour's letters describing her waggon journey to the heart of Matabili land»; from Skeat, A Student's Pastime, 131: «It is *quite* a mistake (= a downright, great, complete mistake) to suppose that a *pair*, in old books, always means two. It usually means a *set*. Hence a pair of *beads* (Chancer); a pair of *cards*, i. e. a *pack*; a *pair* of stairs, i. e. a *flight*, whence two-pair back'»; from Hardy, Jude the Obsure I 227 (Tauchn.): «I never thought you cared for me at all, till *quite* lately» (= the other day only, a very short time ago); from Academy, March 19, 1898, 313<sup>c</sup>: «For example, we had hoped, *quite* hoped, to publish Dr. George Brandes' Study of Shakespeare last October»; and Academy, March 11, 1899, 288<sup>b</sup>: «Before we give some examples of Mr. Stone's exotic metres, let us say that his essay is *quite* one of the most lucid and scholarly treatments of its subject with which we are acquainted».

If I say, «Why, she's *quite* a child!» with a strong stress on *child*, every hearer must feel that I want to give marked expression to my surprise at finding a child, where I had expected a young woman. The sentence-modifier *quite* may even have a plural noun immediately after it, as in the following quotations: Review of Reviews, April 1892, 380<sup>b</sup>: «It seems that there is a regular traffic in young women, sometimes *quite* children being brought across the Pacific.

and sold into slavery of the worst kind»; Punch, July 24, 1897: «Oh yes. I suppose you wore them [the Early Victorian Bonnet] when you were *quite girls*».

As has repeatedly been pointed out in the preceding pages, the strong-stressed word-modifier *quite* = 'completely', 'thoroughly', 'entirely', is common enough too in Modern English. There need not be any modal admixture of surprise, incredulousness, sarcasm, irony, etc. in the force of *quite* in such phrases as '*quite true*', '*quite satisfied*', '*quite gone*', '*quite sure*', '*quite empty*', '*quite full*'; and I have already pointed out that such phrases as '*quite a gentleman*', '*quite a mistake*', '*quite one of the best*', '*quite time*', '*quite lately*', may contain mere matter-of-fact statements in which *quite* is respectively equivalent to 'thorough', 'complete', 'emphatically', 'high', 'very', everything depending on whether *quite* is strong-, or weak-stressed.

Of course it would be easy enough to imagine cases in which *quite* before *full*, for instance, would give a modal, subjective colouring to the sentence in which it was used, instead of merely modifying the sense of *full*, as it does in the matter-of-fact statement, «The hotel is *quite full*». Thus, *quite* would be a weak-stressed «word-sentence-modifier» in such an envy-prompted speech as the following: «Why, I declare Mrs. Leo Hunter had her house *quite full* of fashionable people at her last party! I don't know what the world is coming to, for one! Mrs. Leo Hunter, indeed! And her father a country doctor too! It's really too bad, my dear».

A case of *quite* as a word-modifier that deserves especial attention, I think, is its use in the phrase «*Quite so*», common in colloquial English to express complete assent to another's statements, at the same time often

with anticipated triumph over a vanquished opponent in argument. In it, *quite* has strong stress, and so is enclitic. The Dutch equivalent is: «Precies!» German: «Zugegeben, aber . . . .». I subjoin a few examples: Punch, 1883, II (vol. 85), 274<sup>a</sup>: «It is presumed by the English Law 'that a man is innocent until he has been proved to be guilty'. *Quite so*; and now let us see how it works». Punch, Nov. 17, 1894, 229<sup>a</sup>: «Of course every one said it was a success. *Quite so*; who would be rude enough to say it was a failure?». Punch, Oct. 13, 1894, 169<sup>a</sup>: «*Quite so*», says Druriolanus (= Sir Augustus Harris, manager of Drury Lane Theatre), «a nobleman's country house. I will show you how to do it». And he does. «O Todgers's can do it when it likes!»<sup>1</sup>. Tauchn. Mag. April, 1893, 46: «*Quite so*, madam», said Holmes, in his soothing way. «I have no doubt you have been annoyed more than enough already over this business».

One more case of word-modifying *quite* = 'fully', 'in every respect' may deserve a few words in conclusion. I mean its use before *as* and *so* followed by an adjective or adverb . . . . *as*.

As regards affirmative sentences I have only to observe that '*quite as . . . as*' merely emphasizes the notion of equality, as, for example, in, «This pear is *quite as* sweet *as* the last».

In the case of negative sentences, I find both '*not quite as . . . as*', and '*not quite so . . . as*', as the following

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<sup>1</sup> Dickens, Chuzzlewit, ch. IX (Househ. Ed., p. 76<sup>b</sup>): «Quarts of almonds; dozens of oranges; pounds of raisins; stacks of biffins; soup-plates full of nuts. — Oh, Todgers's could do it when it chose! mind that».



examples, many of which I owe to the courtesy of Mr. P. Roorda, of Groningen, will show.

Examples of *not quite as . . . as*: Punch, Dec. 29, 1894, Preface to vol. 107, p. IV: «The New Village, Dr. Syntax, may *not* be *quite as* picturesque — in the old artistically dilapidated, damp, dirty, disease-engendering sense — *as* the old one». Thackeray, Pendennis II 6: «You are *not quite as* tall *as* Goliath certainly», the other answered with a laugh that was rough and yet tender. Dickens, Sketches by Boz (Tauchn.) 227: «He did *not* make *quite as* much noise *as* at other times». Marryat, Percival Keene, 227: «The officers were *not quite as* civil *as* they might have been». Norris, My Friend Jim 43: «I hoped that after all he might *not* be *quite as* hard to hit *as* I had supposed». Id. *ibid.* 200: «I am *not quite as* clever *as* I think myself». Id. *ibid.* 202: «He was *not quite as* cool *as* he had been earlier in the day». Id. *ibid.* 248: «We *haven't* always been *quite as* good friends *as* we once were, but that has been my fault».

Examples of *not quite so . . . as*: Norris, My Friend Jim 219: «She did *not* put it *quite so* coarsely *as* that». Literary World, January 19, 1895, 43<sup>a</sup>: «Of all the political stage-shiftings that we have been called upon to witness during the present decade, *none* has been *quite so* surprising *as* the aspect of Europe during the few weeks that preceded Nov. 1, 1894, the day on which the Emperor Alexander III of Russia died». Dickens, Chuzzlewit 168<sup>a</sup> (Househ. Ed.): «She has *not* been *quite so* happy *as* she used to be, of late».

These two series of examples, of which the second might be added to almost *ad libitum*, naturally suggest the question whether the use of 'not quite as . . . as', as against that of 'not quite so . . . as', marks any real difference of

meaning between the two phrases. But this would open up the general question as to the difference in nineteenth century English between *not as . . . as*, and *not so . . . as*, which will form the subject of one of the following chapters.

## V. So.

### A.

The Old Engl. *swā* is a demonstrative adverb meaning 'in a manner or to a degree that is indicated by some other word or words following (usually forming a dependent clause, either abridged or unabridged), or implied in the general meaning of the sentence'. If the manner or the degree is implied, *swā* is not followed by a correlative.

But if the manner or degree is indicated by some other word or words following, the adverb *swā* has for its correlative the conjunction *swā*, or the conjunction *þat*; e. g. Saxon Chronicle 896 [Sweet, A. S. Reader 41, 179]: *þā wāron fulnēah tū swā lange swā þā oðru* = 'they were very nearly twice *as long as* the others'; King Alfred's Preface to his version of Gregory's *Cura Pastoralis* [Ibid. 5, 15]: *Swæ clæne hīo wæs oðfeallenu on Angelcynne ðætte swīde fēawa wāron behionon Humbre ðe hiora ðēninga cūden understondan on Englisc* = 'so completely was it [book-learning] fallen away in England, *that* there were few on this side the Humber that could understand their rituals in English'.

In the correlative pair *swā . . . swā*, exemplified in the first of these quotations, the first *swā* is a demonstrative adverb, the second a relative conjunction. The adverb *swā* is often found strengthened by *eall*; e. g. Matth. XX 14

[Sweet, A. S. Reader 53, 65]: *ic wylle bysum ġtemestum syllan eall swā mycel swā þē* = 'I will give unto this last quite as much as to thee'. Aelfric on the Old Testament [ibid. 57, 39]: *God silf, sē þe æfre þurhwunode . . . eall swā mihtig swā hē nū is* = 'God himself, who has always continued quite as mighty as he is now'.

The subsequent history of the correlative pairs *swā . . swā* and *eall swā . . swā* is admirably treated in the New English Dictionary, i. v. *as*. «As», says Dr. Murray, «is a worn-down form of *all-so*, OE. *al-swā*, 'wholly so, quite so, just so', which in its simple demonstrative use remains dissyllabic (see *Also*), but as a relative [= conjunction] and antecedent [= adverb] has been phonetically weakened through *alswā*, *alsa*, *als*, *as*, and *alswā*, *alswo*, *also*, *alse*, *ase*, *as*, to (æz). This phonetic weakening, in each of its successive stages, began with the relative sense, whence it extended to the other senses: even the weak demonstrative was reduced in northern dialects to *als*, but remains *also* in Standard English. The correlation in 'the colour is as bright as gold', where the first *as* is demonstrative or antecedent [= adverbial], and the second relative [= conjunctive], 'in that degree bright, in which degree gold (is bright)', was originally expressed by *so . . so*, OE. '*swā beorht swā gold*'; but the antecedent or demonstrative form was also strengthened by *all*, '*eall swā beorht swā gold*'; constructions which long survived in the south, as '*sō briht sō (se) gold*', and '*al sō (alse) briht sō (se) gold*'. The prefixed *all*, though originally emphatic (= altogether, quite), soon lost its force, and *al-swā*, *al-so* came to imply no more than the simple *swā*, *sō*. Hence, by 1200 (in the north) *alswa* had begun to appear in the subordinate clause likewise, '*alswa brihht alswa gold*', a construction soon generally

adopted, though almost always with the relative in a phonetically weaker form than the antecedent, e. g. '*alswa* briht *alse* gold, *also* briht *alse* gold, *alse* briht *ase* gold, *als* briht as gold', but finally with both correlatives worn down, '*as* briht as gold'. *Alse*, *ase*, *as* was even substituted as the relative, when the original *swā*, *so* remained as the antecedent, whence the modern 'not *so* bright as gold'; OE. *nā swā* beohrt *swā* gold; 13th cent. Southern English: 'nowht *so* briht *so* (*se*) gold', and 'nowht *so* briht *alse* (*ase*) gold'. With the wearing down of *al-so* to *as*, cf. mod. Germ. *also*, *als*, in '*also* bald *als* er kam = ME. '*all-so* sone *als* he com', Mod. E. '*as* soon as he came'».

So far Dr. Murray in the NED.

The modern distinction according to which *so* . . . *as* is especially found in negative and certain interrogative sentences, and *as* . . . *as* in affirmative sentences and negative questions, has sprung up in Early Middle English, and, as Koch observes, «ist historisch begründet, insofern in *as* eigentlich *eall* and *swā* (ganz so) enthalten ist, das die volle Gleichheit ausspricht, während nach der Negation nur *swā* (so) stehen kann» (Hist. Gramm.<sup>2</sup> II 447). This distinction is a clear case of desynonymisation by a process that has been going on for centuries, and is at work even now, as we shall see in the sequel.

It is doubtful whether Chaucer has instances of *so* . . . *as* in affirmative sentences, to express simple equality. In the Prol. to the Canterb. T. 169—171: «And, whan he rood, men mighte his brydel here — Ginglen in a whistling wind as clere, And eek as loude as dooth the chapel belle», the Harleyan MS. reads «so» for the first *as*, and other MSS. have *als* and *al-so*, thus showing the uncertainty that prevailed on this point at the time.

Chaucer's usual practice in affirmative sentences is to use *as . . . as* to express the comparative of equality. In Prologue 287: «*As* lene was his hors *as* is a rake», the Harleyan MS. has *al so*, and the rest *as*. This is in accordance with Dr. Murray's observation, that the phonetic weakening extended from the relative (conjunctive) sense to the demonstrative (adverbial) sense. Cf. Prol. 92: «He was *as* fresh *as* is the month of May», where all the MSS. have *as . . . as*.

In *Piers the Plowman* there are instances of *as . . . so* in affirmative sentences, e. g. C VIII 232: «So shalt thou come to a court *as* cleer *so* the sonne».

In negative sentences Chaucer, and Middle Engl. in general, have *so . . . as*: Prologue 321: «Nowher *so* bisy a man *as* he ther nas». The following quotations from *Maundeville* I take from Mätzner, II 2, 491: *Maundev.* p. 107: The cytee is *not* now *so* gret *as* it was wont to be; *ibid.* p. 160: Sum men love *not* hem *so* wel *as* the othere; *ibid.* p. 193: Other snayles there ben, that ben fulle grete, but *not so* huge *as* the other; *ibid.* p. 207: *No* cytee of the world is *so* wel stored of schippes, *as* is that.

In *Piers the Plowman* I have found an instance of *so . . . so* in a negative sentence: C XIV 188: «For ich see noone *so* ofte sorfeten (= surfeit) sothliche *so* mankynde».

In Shakespeare's works *so . . . as* and *as . . . as* in general conform to the modern rule given higher up.

We have now to consider a case of great interest, of which the earliest instance known to me dates from the middle of the fifteenth century: I mean the use of *so . . . as* in affirmative sentences, which we find exemplified in Macanlay's words, *Essays* IV 146: «In a world *so* full of temptation *as* this», as well as in *Townley Mysteries* 37 (ab. 1460):



«Now, who would not be glad that had, A child *so* lufand *as* thou art?»

Mätzner does not sufficiently distinguish this case of *so . . . as* from those cases in which *so . . . as* is used in negative sentences, and in such interrogative sentences as lead up to a negative answer, e. g. Young, Night Thoughts VII 1335: «Is there hypocrisy *so* foul *as* this?»

The NED. i. v. *as* merely says that in certain affirmative sentences *so . . . as* is employed, and refers the student to information to be given i. v. *so*, for which we are likely to have to wait for some years still.

The NED.'s earliest quotation for the use of *so . . . as* we are discussing, is the one from the Townley Mysteries given above, which also Mätzner cites Gramm. II 2, 491. Compare the following parallel instances taken from Mätzner, the NED., and Joh. Storm's *Englische Philologie*<sup>2</sup> 697. [Prof. Storm by the way is the only writer on English usage known to me, who l. c. has drawn attention to the fact that 'a man *so* busy *as* you are', does not mean the same thing as 'a man *as* busy *as* you are'.]

Locke, Human Understanding: I shall be pardoned for calling it by *so* harsh a name *as* madness. Richardson Pamela III 82: To think I should act *so* barbarously *as* I did. Trollope, the American Senator I 141: It was really suicide for an attorney to throw away business *so* excellent *as* this. Dickens, Humphrey's Clock III 119: When a man puts himself in my power *so* thoroughly *as* you have done. Trollope, Phineas Finn II 60: There can be no reason for my going to the house of a man I dislike *so* much *as* I do Robert Kennedy.

And the following from Shakespeare, Romeo and Jul. I 1, 140: «All *so* soon *as* the all-cheering sun, Should, in the

furthest east, begin to draw, The shady curtains from Aurora's bed»<sup>1</sup>. — If we compare the two following quotations from Macaulay's Essays IV 146: «In a world *so* full of temptation *as* this»; and IV 98: «Countries which, a century hence, may not improbably contain a population *as* large *as* that which now inhabits Europe», it is evident that we could employ neither *as . . . as* in the first, nor *so . . . as* in the second passage.

As Koch observes (see ante, p. 69), the use of *as . . . as* in affirmative sentences, and *so . . . as* in negative sentences is based on the historical fact that *as . . . as*, being equivalent to 'altogether *so . . . as*', especially emphasizes the notion of equality, thus leaving to *so . . . as* the function of expressing the notion of degree, which *swā*, either by itself, or followed by a correlative, has expressed from the earliest period of the English language down to our time.

Grein's *Sprachschatz* i. v. *swā* 2 [«*emphatisch, ohne eigentliche Zurückweisung: so, gar, so gar (tam, valde)*»], cites a great number of passages in OE poetry, where *swā* is thus used, and which in Mod. E. are represented by such phrases as «this maiden *so* fair to look at», «I am *so* glad you are come», etc.

Mätzner II 2, 117—8 traces the same usage through Middle E. to such passages from Dickens, as *Chuzzlewit* I 3: «I am *so* very glad you have come», and *Battle of Life* 2: «I think I remember something of it . . . but not much. It's *so* long ago». Mätzner characterizes it as a

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<sup>1</sup> In Shak., *Venus and Adonis* 1021—2, the first Quarto (1593) reads: «Fy, fy, fond loue, thou art *as* full of feare, As one with treasure laden, hem'd with theeues». Here, all modern editions, including the Cambridge, read «*so* full of fear», and the Cambridge Edd. do not even give the genuine reading in their apparatus criticus.

«Gradbestimmung durch *so* bei Adjektiven und Adverbien, wobei der Maßstab, als vorausgesetzt, verschwiegen ist, und der Vorstellung oft ein beliebig grosser Maßstab freigestellt wird».

It would seem that in most cases the subaudition that would express the understood standard of measure, may most naturally be thought of as a consecutive clause introduced by the conjunction *that*. In the quotation just given from Dickens's *Battle of Life*, for instance, it is evident that after «It's *so* long ago», we must supply from the preceding: «that I cannot possibly recollect much of it». And in «I am *so* very glad you have come», it is natural to account for the intensive force of *so* by supposing some such subaudition as, «that I hardly know how to express my joy».

If *so* has *that* for its correlative in the subordinate clause, *so* is always a demonstrative adverb pointing to the degree to which a quality is predicated of a subject: He was *so* poor *that* he hardly knew how to keep body and soul together. It is also, though more rarely, thus used before verbs, e. g. *Literary World*, Febr. 26, 1892, 191<sup>c</sup>: «His drunken snores *so* disturbed the minister and the congregation, *that* two tithing-men were forced to climb the ladder-like staircase, and pull him down».

Midway between the omission of the consecutive clause, exemplified in «I am *so* glad you have come», and the full expression of it, seen in «He gazed at the flame *so* long that both his eyes were dazzled», is a peculiar construction; frequent in contemporary English, in which the consecutive clause is asyndetically co-ordinated with the principal sentence, and is made to precede it, e. g. Thackeray, *Philip* (1888), p. 374: «Miss Baynes would have danced

with a mopstick, she was *so* fond of dancing» = she was so fond of dancing, that she would have danced with a mopstick = Du. «Ze had met een bezemsteel kunnen dansen, zóó dol was ze erop».

Cf. Punch, Dec. 26, 1891, 305<sup>a</sup>: «I believe he's in the dog-box, m'lud. They had to put him there, he was so refractory in the guards' van». Literary World, January 15, 1897, 51<sup>a</sup>: «Could the various notable men and women discussed in these pages pass audible comments upon the verdicts here written down, it is well-nigh impossible to imagine that a single one of them would burst forth into a complaint, with *such* obvious gentleness and justice has Mr. Dobson presented them to their posterity». Compare a similar construction with *too*: Rev. of Reviews, Oct. 15, 1892, 353<sup>a</sup>: «He [John Bright] loved Scotland, Scottish terriers, and Scottish poets, but he did not like Scottish theology, it was *too* full of the gridiron» = 'Scottish theology was too full of the gridiron for John Bright to like it'.

A very common case of *so* expressing degree before adjectives and adverbs, is that in which it has for its correlative *as* followed by an infinitive preceded by *to*; as, for example, in Dickens, Pickwick II 20: «You would have been . . . if not dead, at all events *so near* it *as* to have taken to stopping at home»; of which I need not multiply examples.

And as a case of *so* expressing degree in affirmative sentences, I also consider the *so . . . as* which we have in Macaulay's phrase 'in a world *so* full of temptation *as* this'.

For it must now be evident to every reader that, if I say, 'a district, *as large as* the whole of Hampshire, was laid waste by the ferocious soldiery', I mean a district which

I state to be equal to Hampshire in extent; whereas, if I say, 'a district *so large as* Hampshire of course requires a strong staff of revenue officers', I mean the county of Hampshire itself, which, under the circumstances, I call 'large to a high degree'.

And in the same way, if Macaulay speaks of 'a world *so full of temptation as this*', he does not mean another world, equal to this one, so far as the number of its temptations is concerned; but what he means is, this world of ours, which he characterizes as very full of temptation.

If, in the passage from the Essay on the Human Understanding, given on p. 71, Locke expects to be pardoned for calling a quality by '*so harsh a name as* madness', he does not mean another name equally harsh as madness is, but he means the name of madness itself, which, according to the wording of his sentence, he admits to be very harsh at first sight.

Or, to take a third example, who can fail to see that in the quotation from Master Humphrey's Clock on the same page, the man who has thoroughly put himself in the speaker's power, is the person addressed himself, and not another individual equally off his guard with the present victim?

The curious thing about the phrases last discussed is, that in them *so* no longer expresses a degree indicated by some standard, understood, or expressed by a clause introduced by a correlative such as *that* or *as*; as *so* does in: 'it is *so* long ago'; 'it is *so* hot to-day *that* I am quite unfit for work'; 'her eyes were *so* dark *as* to darken their whole neighbourhood in her face'. — In fact, the standard by which in such a phrase as '*so harsh a name as* madness',



the degree of harshness of the name 'madness' is measured or indicated, is the word 'madness' itself, introduced by the correlative *as*. In the same way, in 'a district *so* large *as* Hampshire', the degree of largeness of the district of Hampshire is indicated by Hampshire itself. The wording of such phrases consequently indicates that in them we have cases of «None but himself can be his parallel»<sup>1</sup>), and it is obvious that in such cases *so* can only mark a very high degree of a quality.

Occasionally the principle I have shown to underlie the use of *so . . . as* in cases where a very high degree of a quality has to be marked, is violated in Mod. E. In the following passages *as . . . as* is wrongly used for *so . . . as*: Rev. of Reviews, March 15, 1898, 209<sup>a</sup>: «It is somewhat difficult to speak of the Progress of the World in a month that has been characterised by *as* much retrogression *as* February 1898». — Since the Editor of the R. of R. is alluding to the month of February 1898 itself, and not to another month which he compares with it, *as* much should be *so much*. The same reasoning applies to Academy, April 23, 1898, 445<sup>b</sup>: «Fashionable life, open on indulgent terms to unencumbered 'brilliant' persons, I could not endure, even if I had not feared its demoralising effect on a character which required looking after *as much as* my own».

We now see in what way *so*, as distinguished from *as*, from originally meaning 'to a degree that is indicated by a clause introduced by *as* or *that*, or that is implied in the general meaning of the sentence', has come to be an intensive demonstrative adverb. If I say 'So foolish a question

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<sup>1</sup> A 'winged word', taken from an utterly forgotten play, The Double Falsehood, by Louis Theobald. Compare Seneca, Hercules Furens I 1: «Quaeris Alcidae parem? Nemo est nisi ipse».

deserved such an answer', it is clear that the complete sentence would be, 'so foolish a question as the one just mentioned, deserved such an answer as the one given in this case'; and it is equally evident that 'so foolish a question' is equivalent to 'this *very foolish* question', which proves that the force of *so* in such cases is intensive and demonstrative at the same time.

In the foregoing we have also the explanation of such intercalary or prefixed clauses as are exemplified in the following Mätzner quotations from Goldsmith, Vic. of Wakef., ch. 29: «Kings in their palaces should groan for such advantages; but we, *humbled as we are*, should yearn for them». She Stoops to Conquer IV: «*Tortured as I am* with my own reflections, is this a time for explanations?» — Cf. the following, some of which I take from Koch<sup>2</sup> II 449: Dickens Ol. Twist 8: «*Wretched as were the little companions in misery* he was leaving behind, they were the only friends he had ever known». Id. *ibid.*: *Young as he was*, however, he had sense enough to make a feint of feeling great regret at going away». Macaulay, Frederick the Second 77: «The defeat of Kollin, *repaired as it had been*, rather raised than lowered his military renown». Yates, Black Sheep II 96 (Tauchn.): «*Weak and wavering as George is*, his uncle could rule him, I am sure, and would do so, contrary to us». Macaulay, Hist. of Engl. VI 329: «*Much as he had to endure at court*, he could not bear to quit it». Lewes, Goethe I 60: «*Young, curious, excitable as he was*, nothing is more natural than that he should somewhat shock the 'fair respectability' by his pranks and extravagancies». Mac., Hist. of Engl. I 57: «The Non-conformists, *rigorously as she treated them*, have, as a body, always venerated her memory». Thackeray, Philip (1888).

400: «And *shrewd old woman as Mrs. Baynes may be*, you may see how utterly she was mistaken in fancying that her daughter's obedience was still secure». Compare the highly curious construction in *Literary World*, May 4, 1900, 414<sup>a</sup>: «But Rousseau, *poor an instrument as he may have been*, helped to break many a chain, to relieve many a weary heart».

In cases like the above, the older language has *so* (or *as*) as the demonstrative correlative to *as*; e. g. *Piers the Plowman* C, XIV 185—7: «Ich haue wonder in my witt, *so wis as thow art holde*, Wher-for and why, *so wide as thow regnest*, That thow ne ruelest rather renkes than other beestes». *Rob. of Glouc.* 47: «To brynge vs, *so fre as we beth*, in to fyl (= vile) seruage». *Lyly, Euphues* (ed. Arber), 264: «for *as young as I am*, this haue I learned, that one maye poynt at a Starre, but not pull at it». Even in *Mod. E.* we meet with such instances as *Walter Scott, Midlothian*, ch. IV: «for *as frail as Mr. Whackbairn is*, he may live as long as you»; and *Theod. Hook, Gilbert Gurney* 5: «I have no bed to go to». — «It's provoking . . . *so tired as you are*, too». — In *Middle E.*, in *Shakespeare*, and *XVII and XVIII century authors*, I often find *as* . . . as in this case, but the modern practice, as shown in the quotations given above, is to omit the demonstrative *so* (or *as*). Cf. *Much Ado* I 1, 116: «*As* like him as she is»; *Henry V*, III 2, 29: «*As* young as I am, I have observed these three swashers»; *Othello* II 1, 203: «But I'll set down the pegs that make this music, *As* honest as I am»; but also: *I Henry IV*, I 1, 1: «*So* shaken as we are, *so* wan with care, Find we a time for frightened peace to pant». — *Mätzner* II 2, 481, quotes from *Amis and Amiloun* 2173—4: «*As* foule a lazer as he was, The leuedi kist him in that

plas»; and from Skelton I 20: «*As* proud a pohen (= peahen) as ye sprede, Of me and other ye may have nede». — Of more recent writers, the NED. cites from Evelyn (1641): «I took leave of Antwerp, *as* late as it was, embarking for Brussels»; and from Dean Swift (1727): «The world, *as* censorious as it is, hath been so kind», etc.

There can be little doubt, I think, that in sentences like the above, the old construction with *so . . . as* is the correct one. Robert of Gloucester's phrase, «to bring us, *so* free as we are, into vile bondage», is exactly parallel with «a world *so* full of temptation as this is», since it means 'to bring us, who are decidedly free, into bondage'. Thus, in the second quotation from *Oliver Twist*, given above, «young as he was» means: 'he was *very* young, and yet', etc., which proves that the wording of the phrase marks a high degree of the quality referred to, so that the demonstrative adverb omitted before *young* must be the same *so* which we find in 'so harsh a name as madness'.

I therefore conclude that Shakespeare's use of «*as* young as I am», marks a period when the distinctions between *as . . . as* and *so . . . as*, observed in Mod. E., were not so consistently applied as they are now by careful writers; and that the archaism, revived by Carlyle, French Revol. III 1, 1: «For Nature, *as* green as she looks, rests everywhere on dread foundations», is not to be recommended for imitation.

Of course, in the very different case of such a sentence as «Quick as thought, he seized an oar», it is the equalising *as*, and not the intensive *so*, that is omitted before «quick». The same thing we observe in such sentences as the following: Thackeray, Philip, p. 27: «a great number of Margate beaux — ugly, vulgar fellows as ever were».



Id. *ibid.*: «if Mr. Brandon had a mind to meet a devilish good fellow as ever was, my friend Swigby», etc. Id. *ibid.*, p. 34: «a fine fruity wine as ever I tasted»; and even in the curious construction from the same book, p. 116: «Handsome a boy as ever I saw».

The NED. i. v. *as*, p. 478<sup>a</sup>, observes that in cases like «young as I am», the relative conjunction *as* has «acquired somewhat of a concessive force = Though, however». Koch<sup>2</sup> II 449, also says that in them *as* «bezeichnet einen Grad als zugegeben oder eingeräumt». Mätzner II 2, 480, mentioning this construction, says that in it «der Modalsatz tritt an die Stelle des Konzessivsatzes», but judiciously adds: «Übrigens ist diese Satzform nicht auf die konzessive Bedeutung beschränkt». — It is no doubt true that in such a sentence as, «Young as I am, I have seen some service», the subordinate clause may be replaced by such a concessive form of expression as, «However young I may be», or «Though I am very young», but the concessive character is by no means essential to the «*as*» clauses we are discussing, as will be seen on referring to the instances given on pp. 77 ff. In the first two quotations from Goldsmith, 'humbled as we are', and 'tortured as I am by', mean respectively: 'in our present *deeply* humbled condition', and: 'under the *violent* torture of'. In the sentence from Macaulay's *Fred. the Sec.*, 'repaired as it had been', does not mean '*however well* it had been repaired', but on the contrary: '*because* it had been *well* repaired'. Thus also in the passage from Lewes's *Goethe*, 'young, curious, excitable as he was', does not mean: '*though* he was young, curious, and excitable', but: '*since* he was very young, curious and excitable'.

We are now duly prepared, I think, for approaching



the vexed question of '*as far as*' and '*so far as*', as to which modern usage is still in a very unsettled state.

We have seen on p. 76 that *so*, in modern usage, has come to be an intensive demonstrative adverb, and that it may, or may not have a correlative introduced by *as*, e. g. '*So foolish a question (as this) deserved such an answer*'.

We have also seen that in such a sentence as, '*Far as I have travelled, and long as I have been absent, I have never been a single day without thinking of you*', it is the demonstrative intensive *so* that must be supposed to be left out before *far* and *long*; the meaning, in this case, being: '*however far I may have travelled, and however long I may have been absent*'.

It is equally evident that in '*I have travelled as far as he*', we have the equalising adverb *as*, followed by the relative conjunction *as*.

But we are on more slippery ground when we come to consider such a modern sentence as '*As far as I have investigated the matter, the results are satisfactory*'. I find that in a case like this, modern English uses *as far as* and *so far as* almost indiscriminately. Compare, for example, the following two passages from Macaulay's Essay on Hallam's Constitutional History, § 51: «The decision in the case of Strafford was unanimous; *as far as* we can judge, it was unbiassed»; and § 53: «His opinion, *so far as* we can collect it, is this».

The older XVIII and XIX century practice, according to which *as far as* is the only correct phrase, is based on the mechanical rule that *as . . . as* ought to be used in affirmative, *so . . . as* in negative sentences — a rule that I have shown to be at variance with the practice of our best writers of English, who without exception distinguish

between 'a country *as* rich as England' and 'a country *so* rich as England'.

But the rule has numerous adherents still, especially among hidebound grammarians of the old school, and «intuitive philologists.»

Dean Alford, *The Queen's English* (1874), p. 118, referring to such phrases as '*so far as* I know', '*so soon as* he comes, I will leave', says: «It seems to me that *as* might with advantage be substituted for *so*», but he adds characteristically enough, that it would seem to him that *so* marks a logical restriction more expressly than *as* does.

Prof. Alexander Bain, of the university of Aberdeen, on p. 198 of his *Higher English Grammar* brands *so* in 'I will answer the letter *so* soon as I receive it' as a Scotticism, and adds that it is correct to say 'I did *not* receive the letter *so* soon as I expected it'.

It may be that the practice of using *so far as*, *so soon*, *as* in cases like these, has first been brought in by Scottish writers; indeed, the evidence which I shall adduce further on seems to point that way (Walter Scott, Carlyle), but at the same time it must be admitted that there is no lack of English-born writers who are decidedly in favour of using *so far as* in the special case we are discussing.

And I shall now attempt to make clear that those who employ *so far as* are acting in accordance with the principle that underlies the desynonymisation of *so* and *as*, which has been going on since the middle of the fourteenth century, and which in fact began the moment *all-so* ceased to be felt as a strengthened form of *so* (see p. 68).

The phrases in which this uncertainty shows itself in Mod. E. are especially: *as (so) soon as*, *as (so) far as*, *as (so) long as*, *as (so) often as*, *as (so) surely as*.

The uncertainty also occurs with: *as (so) late as, as (so) early as, as (so) much (many) as, as (so) near as*; which will require separate treatment, since, unlike the others, they are not as a rule used conjunctionally.

I shall first consider the first group, as the more interesting of the two.

In the first place it is important to observe that the uncertainty in the phrases of the first group shows itself only in those cases in which they are real 'phrases', and not mere collocations of words; i. e. those cases in which, as Koch<sup>2</sup> II 448 expresses it, «das Demonstrativ mit dem verglichenen Adverb in den Nebensatz zum Relativ herübertritt», and the three words constitute a sort of phrasal conjunction, as, for example, in: he left, *as (so) soon as* [French *aussitôt que*] dinner was over; he may please himself, *as (so) far as* [Fr. *en tant que*] I am concerned; fear nothing, *so (as) long as* [Fr. *tant que*] you are innocent; *so (as?) surely as* [Fr. *chaque fois que*] the clerk came in with the shovel, the master predicted that it would be necessary for them to part.

For it is clear that there is no room for doubt in those cases in which *as (so) long, as (so) far*, etc. continue to be integral parts of the principal sentence, as, for instance, in: he went *as far as* I did; he went *so far as* to intimate that he doubted our veracity; in a province *so far* from the seat of the central government as Kamchatka; the room is *as long as* it is broad; he dawdled *so long as* to miss the train; a paper *so long as* this should have been cut up into sections; etc.

In the case of the 'phrasal conjunctions', above enumerated, Middle E. has both *so . . . as* and *as . . . as* indiscriminately, as Mätzner (II 2, 440. 445) points out with respect to *as (so) soon as* and *as (so) long as*.

Coming down to Early Mod. Eng., I find that Shakespeare is decidedly in favour of *so . . . as* in the phrases in question. From Alex. Schmidt's Shakespeare Lexicon we learn that the meaning of *aussitôt que* is in Shakespeare almost without exception given by *so soon as*, while he has *as soon as* only in such passages as *Wives II 2, 246*: «Use your art of wooing; win her to consent to you: if any man may, you may *as soon as* any», where it is not the phrasal conjunction that we have to do with, since *as soon* undoubtedly forms part of the principal sentence; and *as soon as* does not in this case represent the French conjunction *aussitôt que*.

Instances of *so soon as* = 'aussitôt que', abound in Shakespeare's works; e. g. *Wives IV 5, 67*: «*So soon as* I came beyond Eton, they threw me off»; *Twelfthn. III 4, 194*: «*So soon as* ever thou seest him, draw»; *Romeo I, 1, 140*: «All *so soon as* the all-cheering sun should . . . begin to draw the shady curtains»; *Timon II 2, 14*: «*So soon as* dinner's done, we'll forth again»; *Cymbeline I 1, 75*: «*So soon as* I can win the offended king, I will be known your advocate».

As regards *as (so) long as* = 'tant que', *so* is much more frequent in this phrase than *as*, in Shakespeare. Al. Schmidt mentions only three instances of *as long as*, viz. *Wives II 1, 56*: «I shall think the worse of fat men, *as long as* I have an eye to make difference of men's liking»; *Twelfthn. I 3, 41*: «I'll drink to her *as long as* there is a passage in my throat and drink in Illyria»; *Henry V, IV 7, 113* [Fluellen's speech]: «God pless it and preserve it, *as long as* it pleases his grace, and his majesty too!» — Of *so long as* in the same sense, Schmidt enumerates twelve instances, and reference to Mrs. Cowden Clarke's Concord-

ance has once more convinced me of the amazing accuracy of Alex. Schmidt: there are no other instances in Shakespeare's plays, whether of the one or the other.

Not to multiply instances, I merely mention that in Shakespeare there are many more instances of *so oft as*, *so sure as* («For 'tis a bastard, *so sure as* this beard's grey», Winter's Tale II 3, 162), and *so far as* («Yea, and elsewhere [I have paid all], *so far as* my coin would stretch», I Henry IV, I 2, 61), than there are of *as oft as*, *as sure as*, and *as far as*.

If now we turn to the Authorised Version of the Scriptures, of 1611, we are somewhat surprised to find, on consulting Cruden's Concordance, that the meaning of *aussitôt que* is in the English Bible invariably expressed by *as soon as*; and that the sense of *tant que* is given by *as long as*, as well as by *so long as*, the instances of *as long as*, however, far outnumbering those of *so long as*; compare, for instance, Romans 7, 2: «the woman . . . is bound to her husband *so long as* he liveth», with I Corinthians 7, 39: «the wife is bound by the law *as long as* her husband liveth».

We further find that *as oft(en) as* occurs four times in the English Bible, while I can find in it no instances of *so oft(en) as*.

We see, then, that the Auth. Version, as against Shakespeare, favours the forms *as soon as*, *as long as*, *as often as*, for the phrasal conjunctions that express respectively the senses of *aussitôt que*, *tant que*, and *aussi souvent que*.

Milton usually has *soon as* for 'aussitôt que': Par. Lost IX 1046: «*Soon as* the force of that fallacious fruit . . . was now exhaled . . . up they rose»; *ibid.* 888: «Adam, *soon as* he heard The fatal trespass done by Eve, amazed, Astonied stood and blank»; *ibid.* V 138: «*Soon as* they forth were



come to open sight Of dayspring . . . Lowly they bowed»; Comus 68: «*Soon as* the potion works, their human countenance . . . is changed».

This omission of the demonstrative adverb, also in phrasal conjunctions, is found in all the periods of the language. Koch<sup>2</sup> II 448, quotes from the Saxon Chronicle: «Hē forð fērde, sōna swā hē hider cōm»; cf. Byron, 320 (apud Mätzner): «For *long as* Albion's heedless sons submit . . . So long shall last their unmolested reign» (comp. pp. 77 ff.)

In Par. Regained IV 332: «Where, *so soon* As in our native language, can I find That solace?» Milton uses *so soon as*, because this is a rhetorical question, leading up to a negative answer, just as in the modern «Is there hypocrisy *so foul as* this?» Besides, *so soon as* is not, strictly speaking, a phrasal conjunction here.

For French *en tant que*, German *insofern als*, I find in Milton *as far as*: Par. Lost I 138; «*As far as* gods and heavenly essences Can perish».

Bunyan in The Pilgrim's Progress usually has *so soon as*; p. 25: «I met with a gentleman *so soon as* I had got over the Slough of Despond»; p. 89: «*So soon as* the man overtook me, it was but a word and a blow, for down he knocked me, and laid me for dead». — Bunyan also favours *so long as*; p. 187: «They seem to be hot for heaven, *so long as* the flames of hell are about their ears».

In the eighteenth century there is a marked preference for *as soon as*, *as long as*, *as often as*, *as far as*.

The following examples with the «so» construction all belong to the nineteenth century. The use of *so* in these conjunctive phrases is especially met with in Scottish

writers (Walter Scott, Carlyle), and may in part be due to the influence of Shakespeare's language, which in the case of Walter Scott is known to have been very strong.

**So soon as.** Scott, *Minstrelsy* I 21: «A Celtic bard stepped forth, *so soon as* the king assumed his seat»; id., *Bride of Lammermoor*, 78: «We agreed to leave Scotland together, *so soon as* I should have visited the alienated mansion of my fathers»; Carlyle, *Friedrich* I 231: «To have frankly drawn sword for his religion and his rights *so soon as* the battle fairly opened»; James Bryce [also a Scot], *The American Commonwealth* [2nd ed.] I 13: «It exists only as an aggregate of communities, and will therefore vanish, *so soon as* the communities which compose it, separate themselves from one another».

Storm, *Engl. Philologie*<sup>2</sup> 697, cites from Addison, *Spectator*, No. 120: «Natural love in brutes is much more violent . . . than in rational creatures . . . [but] *so soon as* the wants of the [young] cease, the mother withdraws her fondness»; and adds: «*so soon as* = the moment that, od. no sooner do the wants cease, than etc.; nachdrücklicher als *as soon as*. 19. Jh.: *so soon as* we had finished our meal, Haggard, *Quat.* I 241». And Imm. Schmidt, *Gramm. der engl. Sprache* § 475, Anm., says: «Es findet sich auch *so soon as* . . . , besonders zum Ausdruck einer Bedingung».

Indeed, though on the whole *as soon as* is still the more usual phrase to express the sense of *aussitôt que*, a decided tendency towards desynonymisation of *as soon as* and *so soon as* is observable in contemporary English. To me there is hardly any doubt that *so soon as* is not only the more emphatic phrase which Prof. Storm finds it, but as against *as soon as*, decidedly marks as a causal one the clause which it introduces; in other words, while the

temporal relation is left to be expressed by *as soon as*, *so soon as* is beginning to be set apart for the expression of the causal relation between the dependent clause and the principal one. In '*as soon as* I saw him, I took aim at him', it is the temporal relation that is laid stress on; in '*so soon as* I saw his face, all my fears vanished', especial stress is laid on the fact that the mere sight of his face was sufficient to dissipate all my fears. We shall presently see something very like this in the case of *as long as* and *so long as*.

***So long as.*** 1) Carlyle, Past and Pres. III 11: «In the poor old Earth, *so long as* she revolves, all inequalities, irregularities disperse themselves». Id. Friedrich, X 90: «Then again, *so long as* Sarah Jennings held the Queen's Majesty in bondage, some gleams of Kinghood for us under Marlborough». Longfellow (*apud* Mütznér), I 153: «*So long as* you are innocent, fear nothing»; *ibid.* 155: «*So long as* I had gold, I gave it to thee freely». Bulwer, Money III 1: «*So long as* he stepped there, I had no apprehension». Dickens, Nickleby II 272: «*So long as* he had been a passive instrument in his hands, Sir Mulberry had regarded him with no other feeling than contempt». Id., Little Dorrit I 265: «*So long as* little Dorrit is quiet . . . she will continue to come there». Id., Sketches by Boz, 288: «His novels which, *so long as* good taste continues to exist, cannot fail to instruct». Id., Humphrey's Clock III 119: «I will always protect you *so long as* you deserve it». XIX Century, June 1891, 906: «In antiquity, *so long as* the canalisation of the country was properly carried out, the fertility of the alluvial plain enabled great and prosperous nations to have their home in the Euphrates valley». Punch 1883, I (vol. 84) 117<sup>a</sup>: «The Hon. Slingsby Bethell

made no objection to the performances, *so long as* he was taking a personal part in them».

2) Dickens, *Master Humphrey's Clock* I 105: «What is the odds *so long as* the spirit is expanded?» — Cf. the colloquialism «What's the odds *so long as* you 're happy»? But I find also, *Punch*, May 4, 1895, 216<sup>b</sup>: «What's the odds» to them [the Kent farmers] «*as long as* they're happy»? — Dickens, *Christm. Car.* 43: «Never mind *so long as* you are come». Miss Braddon, *Mount Royal*, I 303: «I'll try and make your life as agreeable as I can . . . *so long as* you don't ask me to fill the house with visitors». Ead., *Henry Dunbar* I, 286: «You may call me anything, *so long as* you don't call me when the soup is cold». *Punch*, Sept. 8, 1894, 112<sup>a</sup>: «I don't care who takes [the letter to Lord P.], *so long as* it is taken». *Punch*, Oct. 27, 1894, 196<sup>a</sup>: «But what does it all matter *so long as* we've met, and it's all right between us?» *Academy*, Sept. 5, 1896, 155<sup>a</sup>: «[They are] friandises as innocuous and even wholesome as they are palatable, doubtless, *so long as* they are partaken of deliberately, sparingly, and with due corrective concomitants». *Rev. of Reviews*, April 15, 1897, 389<sup>b</sup>: «No detail was too small for his [Sir George Tryon's] notice; nor was anything too much trouble for him, *so long as* it was likely to increase in the smallest degree the efficiency of any branch of the public service».

In some of the above passages the use of *so long as* may be due to the negation in the principal sentence, or to the fact that the latter contains a rhetorical question leading up to a negative answer. The first is almost certainly the case in the following quotation from Henry Latham, *Examinations*, 19: «From this it follows that, when once we begin to employ the stimulant of examinations,

we cannot do without it *so long as* the process of education lasts».

*As long as* is, certainly, still the more usual phrase in the sense of *tant que*, e. g. Macaulay, Hist. of Engl. I 33: «*As long as* the general spirit of the administration was mild and popular, they were willing to allow some latitude to their sovereign».

But where, as in the instances given under 2), the temporal sense of *tant que* slides into the conditional sense of 'provided that', 'if only', 'seeing that', 'now that', modern writers would seem decidedly to prefer the form *so long as*.

*So far as*. Carlyle, Friedrich III 104: «Seckendorf accordingly had been instructed to hunt wide, and throw in discouragements, *so far as possible*». Dickens, Humphrey's Clock I 295: «*So far as* their means allowed». Marryat, Settlers 132: «*So far as* we could ascertain». Id. ibid. 149: «*So far as* he understands it». Cooper, Spy, introd.: «He was poor, ignorant, *so far as* the usual instruction was concerned». Punch, 1880 I (Vol. 78) 266<sup>a</sup>: «Shut off from any public use, or, indeed, *so far as* he can see, from any use whatever». Punch, 1882 II (Vol. 83) 57<sup>a</sup>: «*So far as* the players were concerned, they might as well have been engaged in Fives or Football». — From XVIII century English, Storm (p. 697) cites from Boswell's Johnson (1892) 57: «*So far as* I can learn» (Johnson loq.); ibid., 203: «nor did he, *so far as* is known, furnish any productions except», etc.

In Notes on Webster's Dictionary in the New York weekly The Nation, G. P. Marsh writes: «In a lexicon of a dead language the vocabulary of the recorded literature may be absolutely complete, *so far as* the specification of the words which compound it is concerned».



This passage is cited and selected for special condemnation as 'bad English', by Washington Moon, on pag. 106 of his book *Bad English*. Mr. Moon is one of the most hidebound and pragmatic dogmatists I know of, on questions of English usage. He unhesitatingly condemns the use of *so long as* and *so far as* as phrasal conjunctions, and stigmatises as one of the most hardened offenders on this point, Edward S. Gould, the author of a book, otherwise unknown to me, entitled *Good English, or Popular Errors in Language*. From this last book Washington Moon quotes the following passages, holding them up as flagrant violations of English idiom: p. 21: *so long as* its place is occupied; p. 143: and *so long as* he occupies the Secretary's desk; p. 37: *so far*, at least, as this dictionary is concerned; p. 94: This is very well, *so far as* it goes; p. 115: This is fortunate, *so far as* its author is correct; p. 12: *So far as* the newspapers are concerned; p. 159: it is to be observed that, *so far as* we know, etc.; p. 191: *So far as* that sentence is concerned; p. 214: *so far as* I can; p. 223: *so far as* I can judge, etc.

Though I am far from sharing Mr. Moon's dogmatic view on this point, I am bound to admit that, in contemporary English, instances of *as far as* (I can see, I am concerned, etc.), are more frequent than those cases in which *so far as* is used; and that *as far as I can see* must still be pronounced to be the more usual phrase of the two, also in our time: Scott, *Last Minstrel* IV 7: «*As far as* they could judge by ken». Darwin, *Descent of Man*, I 2 ch. 11: . . . . «*as far as* I can see». Punch, 1880 I (vol. 78), 169<sup>a</sup>: «*As far as* they are concerned, the performance more than realised my expectations». Ibid. II (vol. 79), 133<sup>a</sup>: «This [the Weald of Kent] may mean anything, *as*

*far as* I am concerned, from Gravesend — I think that's in Kent — to Margate, which I know is in that county». Hardy, *Jude the Obscure* I 227: «She's pretty enough *as far as* that goes». Thackeray, Philip 40: «Human nature, *as far as* I am able to learn, has not much changed since the time when Richardson wrote and Hogarth painted, a century ago». Good Words, 1885, 1<sup>b</sup>: «No, Messieurs les Français are a polite people *as far as* lifting the hat is concerned».

Macaulay usually has *as far as*: Hist. of Engl. ch. 20: . . . «*as far as* can now be ascertained»; *ibid.* I 275: «He used it *as far as* he dared». See, however, the two Macaulay quotations on p. 81.

*So surely as* has come to be a phrasal conjunction coming very near in meaning to 'whenever, as often as', and characterising one action as the inevitable concomitant of another; *e. g.* Dickens, Christmas Carol I: «*So surely as* the clerk came in with the shovel, the master predicted that it would be necessary for them to part». *Id.*, Humphrey's Clock III 28: «*So surely as* the night set in, so surely this man was in the night-cellar».

Of *so often as* I have not succeeded in finding instances in XIX century English.

In view of the considerable mass of evidence I have placed before the reader, it cannot now be difficult to draw certain inferences as to the probable fate of such pairs of phrasal conjunctions as *so long as* and *as long as*, *so far as* and *as far as*. As things now stand, 'as far as I can see', and 'so far as I can see', would seem to be equally legitimate, since both forms of expression have the sanction of careful writers.

Still, I may just remind the reader that on p. 82 I have cited Dean Alford's remark as to the more marked logical restriction implied by 'so far as I can see', and I would now add that on p. 697 of his *Engl. Philol.*<sup>2</sup> Prof. Storm cites Henry Sweet's observation that in 'so long as' «the so seems to be emphatic, intensive»; an observation which Storm endorses, adding that in 'so far as I know', *so* is usually strong-stressed, whereas in 'as far as I know' *as* usually has weak stress.

And there are, I think, unmistakeable signs that before long the desynonymisation of the two phrases will be a *fait accompli*; and to me it is not doubtful which of them will carry the day as the correct or standard form of the phrasal conjunction.

In the old saying 'I think I can see into a mill-stone *as far as* most people', we have the equalising function of *as*, for which we have seen there is legitimate historical foundation.

But we have a very different case before us, if we say, 'He is to be pitied rather than condemned, *as far as* I can, judge of the matter'. Here, *as far as* has hardened into a phrasal conjunction, and the first *as* no longer does duty as an equalising adverb: what it points to is the degree to which the man in question deserves pity, a degree of which my knowledge of the man's circumstances is the restricting limit or the standard of measure. And now the whole drift of my argument hitherto has been to show that in Mod. E. from the fifteenth century downward, English speakers have agreed to assign to *as* the function of pointing to the equality of two things in respect of a quality, and to restrict *so* to the function of marking the degree of a quality by reference to some standard, expressed or understood. If this

tendency to differentiate the adverbs *as* and *so*, which I have evidenced from the history of the language during the last three hundred years, is a well-authenticated fact, it cannot fail also to make itself felt in the struggle between *as far as* and *so far as* as phrasal conjunctions; and since the phrasal conjunction has to mark the degree up to which the statement contained in the principal sentence, is vouched for by the speaker, or in other words, to restrict that statement so far as the speaker is concerned, it is the «so» form (*so far as*, *so long as*, etc.) that will undoubtedly ultimately prevail.

If in the case of *so far as* and *as far as* we were fain to reason deductively from a general principle induced from the study of the history of the language, there are with regard to *so soon as* and *as soon as*, and to *so long as* and *as long as*, signs which show that the struggle has virtually been decided in favour of *so soon as* and *so long as* as the standard forms of the respective phrasal conjunctions.

As regards *as soon as* and *so soon as* I would refer the reader to my observations *ante* pp. 84 and 86 ff.; with respect to *as long as* and *so long as* a few additional remarks may not be out of place.

If we compare the two sentences, 'Our friend remained in India *as long as* his brother was in prison', and 'Our friend remained in India *so long as* his brother was in prison', no one who understands modern English can fail to see that they do not convey exactly the same meaning.

The first sentence simply says that the term of our friend's stay in India was equal in length to his brother's term of imprisonment; the two terms may, or may not, have coincided; *as long as* is not a phrasal conjunction at all, as

*long*, for which we might substitute *as many years*, forming part of the principal sentence.

In the second instance, on the contrary, we feel that the speaker wants to indicate a much more intimate connexion between our friend's stay in India and his brother's being in prison; we gather that his brother's confinement was the cause or motive of our friend's staying in India; we see that *so long as* is a real phrasal conjunction with something of a causal meaning.

Now, as regards the first sentence, I am aware that it might be contended that *as long as* may also be a phrasal conjunction, if we merely want to imply that the two terms coincided; but I am equally sure that we could not use *as long as* to express the causal connexion expressed by *so long as* in the second sentence. Nor, as we have seen higher up, is causal connexion the only meaning expressed by the phrasal conjunction *so long as*. The examples given under 2) on p. 89 show that *so long as* is already in common use to express the senses of 'provided that', 'if only', 'seeing that', 'now that', senses in which *as long as* could not be used.

The phrasal conjunction *so long as* is consequently extending its functional sphere, and I have little doubt that, before long, as a phrasal conjunction *so long as* will have ousted *as long as* even in the sense of 'all the time during which'; the collocation *as long as* will then be confined to the function of expressing equality in length of two things, or equality in time of two actions.

As regards *so surely as*, I do not think a modern writer would readily use *as surely as* as a phrasal conjunction to express the sense of 'whenever', which I have exemplified from Dickens on p. 92.



*As soon as* as a phrasal conjunction in the sense of *aussitôt que* is likely for some time to come to keep its ground against the *so soon as* which has been coming in since Walter Scott (see p. 87). We have seen on p. 88 that, like *so long as* and *so surely as*, it has already developed a secondary, *in casu* a causal sense.

*So far as*, as we have seen on pp. 93ff. is already differentiating itself from *as far as* as regards its meaning and function, and there is every probability that *as soon as* and *as far as* as phrasal conjunctions will have to follow the analogy of *so long as* and *so surely as*, and to become *so soon as* and *so far as*.

Perhaps the phrasal conjunction *as often as* will keep the field longer than any of the others, because it is now rarely used, and usually replaced by the terser 'whenever'; phrases that are little used, are less exposed to the influences that are slowly but surely and without intermission changing our modes of speech.

Having thus reviewed the phrasal conjunctions *as (so) far as*, *as (so) soon as*, *so (as) long as*, *so (as?) surely as*, and *as (so) often as*, I come to the second group of phrases mentioned on p. 83 viz. *as (so) late as*, *as (so) early as*, *as (so) near as*, *as (so) much (or many) as*.

Let us first take the «late» and «early» phrases. They are not used as phrasal conjunctions, but as phrasal prepositions. If I say «the MS. was written *as late as* the reign of Edward III», the phrase 'as late as' is equivalent to 'not before'; and in «Traces of the tradition are met with *as early as* the reign of King John», 'as early as' means 'already at the time of'. *As late as* marks the MS. as one of *very late* date, and *as early as* marks the tradition as one of *very early* occurrence. Both the phrases consequently

mark a degree, and therefore it is likely that the forms *so late as* and *so early as* will ultimately prevail.

At the present time, however, *as early as* and *as late as* are still the customary forms. Still, the «so» forms are not unheard of in contemporary English; *e. g.* Mac., Hist. of Engl. I 22: «Some traces of villenage were detected *so late as* the days of the Stuarts». Id. *ibid.* VII 40: *So early as* Christmas 1685, the agents informed the States-General that the plan of a general toleration had been arranged». Dickens, Humphrey's Clock III 513: «They had an interview *so late as* eight».

*As (so) near as* may be a conjunctive as well as a prepositional phrase. It is a kind of prepositional phrase in Shak. As You Like It I 3, 46: «If that thou beest found *So near* our public court *as* twenty miles, Thou diest for it», where *so near as* is equivalent to *within . . . of*. And we have the conjunctive use in Shak. Richard II, 1, 12: «*As near as* I could sift him on that argument, [he appeals the duke] On some apparent danger seen in him Aim'd at your highness»; and in III Henry VI, IV 1, 90: «Tell me their words *as near as* thou canst guess them.» In modern usage, I think, *as near as* is the usual form in both functions, except, of course, where the principal sentence is negative.

I may here mention that *as far as*, which we have already discussed as a conjunction, may also occur as a phrasal preposition, *e. g.* «He accompanied me *as far as* Dover»; Tom Brown's Schooldays 1: «Most of you have travelled down the Great Western Railway *as far as* Swindon». Modern usage is certainly still in favour of the «as» form in this case.

*As (so) much (many) as*, when constituting a phrase, and not a mere collocation of words distributed over the principal sentence and the subordinate clause, may be described as a phrasal adjective and adverb, equivalent to 'no less (fewer) than'; as, for example, in «*as many as* thirteen ships were lost in the late storm»; «*as much as* half a pound was lost in weighing»; Punch 1884 I (Vol. 86), 93<sup>b</sup>: «They've heard you already, and it's *as much as* my place is worth to allow this sort of thing in the Lobby» [a door-keeper speaking] = the penalty I incur for allowing it, is *no less than* the loss of my situation. Dickens, Bleak House I 266: «If old Mr. B. knows there's such a place, it's *as much as* he does» = he *at best* is aware of the existence of the place. — In the last quotation, *as much as* is equivalent to 'all that'; this is also the meaning in Pictorial World, Aug. 13, 1885, 151<sup>a</sup>: «It is *as much as* he can do, to get a little soup and an ortolan or some aspic for the lady he has brought down». Compare also the modern 'I thought *as much*', which is elliptical for 'as much as this', and is equivalent to a strengthened 'this'.

In all these cases the first *as* marks the degree, but so far as I have observed, the «so» form of the phrase is found only in negative sentences, at least in Mod. E.; e. g. Peake, Court and City II 2: «They don't *so much as* tell you how the sun rose»; here *so much as* is used adverbially, and is equivalent to a strengthened 'even', just as it is in Mrs. Wood, Lord Oakbury II 25: «Not caring to be *so much as* seen by the surgeon». Thackeray, Vanity Fair 52: «Becky hardly *so much as* spoke to him. — Cf. the modern phrases: «It was not *so much as* in use»; «without *so much as* saying good day».

*As much as* also occurs as a sort of phrasal conjunction,

and in this case, too, the «as» form is the usual one; e. g. Romans 1, 15: «*as much as* in me is, I am ready to preach»; *ibid.* 12, 18: «*as much as* lieth in you, live peaceably with all men».

With the adverbial use of *as (so) much as* = 'even', we may compare the same use of *as good as* = 'practically, to all intents and purposes', in such cases as the following; Academy, April 3, 1897, 379<sup>c</sup>: «In an article on Col. John Hay, the Critic *as good as* states that the anonymous novel *The Bread-winners* was from his pen». Walford, *Mischief* of Monica, ch. VIII: «I *as good as* said you would». Byron, *Beppo* XXXV: «In law he was almost *as good as* dead».

We further have the causal phrasal conjunction *in as much as* = 'seeing that, since', which we also find run together to *inasmuch as*. Earlier usage also has *in so much as*, *insomuch as*, *for as much as*, *forasmuch as*. *In as much as*, though mainly used in legal phraseology, is also found in ordinary modern writing, e. g. Miss Braddon, *Henry Dunbar* II 300: «I was beginning to feel myself an old man, older than many old men, *in as much as* I had outlived the wreck of the one bright hope which had made life dear to me». — *In so much (insomuch)* points to degree, and is in modern usage always followed by a subordinate clause introduced by *that*.

Finally, we have the conjunctive phrase *much as*, in which on the principle set forth in pp. 77 ff., we must suppose *so* to be omitted before *much*; it usually introduces a concessive clause, e. g. Cooper, *Spy* 6: «*Much as* he loved his wealth, Mr. Wharton loved his children better».

Where *so (as) much* and *as* have not hardened into phrasal adjectives or adverbs, the Bible has both *so much as* and *as much as* in affirmative sentences; compare, on

the one hand, Genesis 43, 34: «Benjamin's mess was five times *so much as* any of theirs»; Proverbs 25, 16: «Eat *so much as* is sufficient for thee»; and, on the other hand, Exodus 16, 5: «It shall be twice *as much as* they gather daily»; I Samuel 2, 16: «Then take *as much as* thy soul desireth».

## B.

Having thus set forth the process of desynonymisation by which *so* before adjectives and adverbs has come to be restricted to the function of expressing the degree of a quality by reference to some standard, and is gradually ousting the *as* which in certain cases is still found filling that function, it remains for me to show that in contemporary English *so* has also assumed the function of expressing an exceptionally high degree without reference to any standard, expressed or understood.

In literary and spoken English, from the very earliest period of the language, if *so* is used before an adjective or adverb, without a correlative, it generally means: 'in such manner, or to such degree as is indicated in any way, or is implied, or is supposed to be known'. In Shakespeare's *Tempest* I 1 27, the Boatswain says to Gonzalo: «Use your authority [, if you have any, over the waves]: if you cannot, give thanks that you have lived *so* long, and make yourself ready in your cabin for the mischance of the hour, if it so hap». Here, «that you have lived *so* long», of course implies: «as to have reached your present age», and *so* is not a mere intensive, no more than it is in such a modern sentence as «*So* foolish a question should never have been asked», which means «a question so foolish as the one we are referring to», etc. As I have shown on p. 77, *so* is a demonstrative intensive in such cases.



But it must be obvious that from *so* as thus used, to *so* as a strong intensive with the sense of 'inexpressibly', the transition is easy enough, especially with speakers given to hyperbolic forms of expression; and we accordingly find that *so* has been employed as a very strong intensive, especially in colloquial usage, for a long time back.

A correspondent in *Notes and Queries*, March 5, 1898, 189<sup>a</sup>, cites from the *Engl. Historical Review* for January 1898, the following passage from a letter written by Elizabeth Cromwell, a granddaughter of the great Protector: «The Tobacco came safe, my bro: was *soe* pleased with it»; and I suspect that it is especially to the fair sex that we owe the strongly intensive sense of *so* which we are discussing. Ladies are notoriously fond of hyperbole, and a strong-stressed *so*, with the first element of the diphthong in it abnormally long, before an adjective, from a lady's lips, conveys a sense widely different from a strong-stressed *very* under the same circumstances. Compare, for example, the almost passionate force of «You are *so* kind!» with the comparatively tame and colourless «You are *very* kind!»

That shrewd «catcher of the manners living as they rise», Mr. Punch, says on Jan. 4, 1896, 11<sup>b</sup>: «This little adverb is a great favourite with ladies, in conjunction with an adjective. For instance, they are very fond of using such expressions as 'He is *so* charming!' 'It is *so* lovely!' etc. . . . 'He is *so* charming.' is a purely feminine expression. 'He is *so* charming that I have made a friend of him', is a purely masculine one, or should be so.»

This exceptionally strong-stressed *so*, usually found underlined, is a special feature also of the female epistolary style of our time, but it is difficult to find examples of it in literature before the present century. In contemporary

English, however, it is very frequent, in the first instance in feminine speech, and then also from the lips of children, of «ladies' men», and of those who habitually trust to hyperbole for producing strong effects; from the nature of the case it is chiefly found in colloquial usage, although under certain circumstances it may also occur in literary English.

The following instances of strongly intensive *so* are highly characteristic of ladies' usage: «Thank you *so* much!» «It was *so* kind of you to think of it!» «That's *so* like you!» «I'm *so* glad you've come!» «The bonnet is *so* lovely!» = It's quite *too* lovely! = Isn't it a perfect love ef a bonnet?

Compare the following examples: Punch, 1865 II (vol. 49), 89<sup>b</sup>: «It is *so* natural for novices to make this excuse, in order that no one may be surprised at finding them in a muddle». — Punch 1880 II (vol. 79), 77<sup>a</sup> ['Robert the City Waiter']: «I hates to see a Gent much hegsited, it does make him *so* forgetful of the Waiter»; *ibid.* 255<sup>a</sup>: «You shan't see anything till the proper time», he called out to them [a number of children]; «and not then, if you're not good»<sup>1</sup>. — «We will be *so* good!» — Punch 1880 I vol. 78), 24<sup>b</sup>: «I have sent to the Attorney-General, but in a letter signed 'Jack', he tells me, 'he has no time to attend to private business!' *So* like him!» — Punch 1882 I (vol. 82), 234: «Ah, how d'ye do, Mrs. Tomkyns? *So* glad to meet you — a — I —». — Literary World, April 8, 1892, 338<sup>a</sup>: «*So* many ladies omit to do this, and it is no uncommon thing to see a lady holding her hat on with one hand, striving to catch the ball [at cricket] with the other,

<sup>1</sup> *Good* here in the nursery sense of Du. *zoet*, Germ. *artig*, Fr. *sage*. Punch 1875 II 133<sup>a</sup>: «Will Baby be *good* on the journey?»

and succeeding in doing neither». — Punch, January 13, 1894, 23<sup>a</sup>: «Let's neutralise everything! *So* much safer. Or neutralise, let's say, Dover and Portsmouth».

In literary English this intensive *so* is found before adverbs in such cases as for example the following passages from Alison, *History of Europe* II 54 (4th ed.), cited in *Notes and Queries*, April 16, 1898, 316<sup>a</sup>: «Their principles . . . were those *so* finely expressed by Louis XVIII»; «The agitation which they *so* sedulously maintained».

It is very difficult to define the force of *so* in these passages; *so* much seems sure that it gives a kind of subjective colouring to the style, and to me it appears to imply a kind of appeal to the reader for his assent, which *very* would certainly fail to do.

There is no such subjective colouring in the intensive *so* as used in *so far from* followed by a gerund; Du. 'wel verre van'; Germ. 'weit entfernt daß'; Fr. '(bien) loin de . . ., (bien) loin que' . . . The NED. i. v. *far*, prints «(*so*) *far from*», so that according to Henry Bradley the use of *so* in this phrase would be optional. Flügel, i. v. *entfernt*, also gives: «(*so*) *far from* mit Gerundium». I am inclined to think that *so* is rarely omitted in this case; Rev. of Reviews, Febr. 1892, 198<sup>b</sup>: «*So far from* finding the reef (= auriferous lode) was likely to give out, they found that the deeper it went the better it became, and *so far from* wishing to abandon their claim, they intended to push forward the extraction of the ore more vigorously than ever». Sweet, *Primer of Spoken English* 95: «Nagle, *so far from* backing him, opposed his appointment». Punch, March 26, 1859, 129<sup>a</sup>: «But in that case those remedies, *so far from* harmonising every corporeal function, . . . would play the deuce with all the corporeal organs». Punch, March 8, 1890, 109<sup>a</sup>:

«Shakespeare, who, with his undoubted talents, should have known better, was, *so far from* being an exception, one of the worst offenders».

Or are we to assume that in cases of this kind there is ellipsis of the verb *to be*, and a turning of the consecutive clause into the form of a principal sentence, so that, for example, «Nagle, *so far from* backing him, opposed his appointment», would be a turning inside out of the sentence, «Nagle *was so far from* backing him, *that* he opposed his appointment?» If this should be the case, we might compare with this the analogous transformation which has given rise to such constructions as, «She would have danced with a mopstick, she was *so fond* of dancing» (see pp. 73 f.). The comma after *was* in the last of the Punch quotations just given shows, however, that by modern writers at least, «He was, *so far from* being an exception, one of the worst offenders», is not felt to be based on «He was *so far from* being an exception, *that he was* one of the worst offenders».

The *so far from* + Gerund, just treated, in which I assume *so* to be an intensive adverb, should not be confounded with another *so far*, which is equivalent to *thus far*, or 'up to the point at which we have now arrived', in which *so* has not intensive, but demonstrative or restrictive force, just as it has in '*so far as I am concerned*'.

The *so far* I am now referring to, is illustrated in the standing phrase '*so far, so good*' = up to the point to which we have now come, I am ready to endorse (or, you can hardly refuse to endorse) the view set forth by the writer or speaker = Germ. '*so weit ist die Sache ja ganz gut (aber . . .)*'. — Punch 1881 I (vol. 80) 142<sup>a</sup>: «*So far, so good*; but we would suggest a further use for the big building». Literary World, May 26, 1893, 480<sup>c</sup>: «Arch-



deacon Brown wanted a curate. *So far, so good*. Mr. John Primrose was selected for the post, and Mrs. Brown, to say nothing of her daughters, was rather unfavourably fluttered by the news that the coming clergyman had a wife».

I subjoin some further illustrations of *so far* = 'thus far': Rev. of Reviews, Jan. 15, 1895, 62<sup>a</sup>: «Mr. Courtney has made no change *so far* in the character of *The Fortnightly*, but Mr. Henley has impressed upon the first number of *The New Review* his own strongly marked individuality». Punch 1880 I (vol. 78) 112<sup>b</sup>: Mr. Cross said in the House of Commons: «It's a case of 'Like it or lump it'<sup>1</sup>. If we

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<sup>1</sup> «If you don't like it, you are free to lump it» (= Germ. 'Wenn du es nicht gern hast, so kannst du's bleiben lassen' = Du. 'graag of in't geheel niet!') is a somewhat vulgar phrase, which has not up to now been satisfactorily accounted for. It is just possible that the original meaning is: 'If you don't like it [the potion, the liquor, the tap], you may just swallow it at one gulp'. Comp. *in the lump* = in the gross = Germ. *in Bausch und Bogen*. But in modern usage, the meaning certainly is: 'If you are not satisfied with what is given or offered, you may please yourself' (vulg. 'you may do the other thing'). — There seems to be a Devonshire verb *to lump*, used in the sense of 'to be sulky', which may have something to do with the phrase. I also find *to lump* used in the sense of 'to move awkwardly and with noise', Germ. 'trampeln'; Punch 1871 I 195<sup>b</sup>: «Mary comes down *lumpily* . . . Mary *lumps* back again, and says through the door, 'There ain't none, Sir'». Hence we might explain *lump it* to mean 'hook it', 'stir your stumps' = Germ. 'trolle dich!' = 'go elsewhere, and see if you will be better served'. But this is mere guess-work. — The adverb *lumpily* in the last Punch quotation means 'heavily awkwardly, unwieldily'; the adjective *lumpy* is especially used of a man's gait, and is also one of the numberless slang synonyms of 'intoxicated'. In the following quotations it refers to awkwardness of gait etc., and to mistakes in rowing: Punch 1878 I (vol. 74) 144<sup>a</sup>: «It was noticed that Bow [the oarsman nearest to the bow of the boat] was decidedly *lumpy*»; *ibid.*, 108<sup>b</sup>: «Was not Number Two rather *lumpy*, and how about Bow's feathering?» Punch, Sept. 22, 1888, 135<sup>a</sup>: «Thirdly, the broad Batavian, scant of



are to be masters of our own water supply, we must pay for it through the nose». — The Public is grumbling already, and *so far*, does not seem to like it. — Rev. of Reviews, March 15, 1898, 215<sup>b</sup>: «*So far*, the tighter the place he has been in<sup>1</sup>, the better does he acquit himself». Academy, April 1, 1899, 380<sup>a</sup>: «Psychology, a science which, *so far*, the great majority of practical teachers have treated with utter disregard». Literary World, May 19, 1899: «Both to the staunch Wagnerian and to that lover of music who

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grace, Who trusts a lucky start in the love-chase, Gives him such lead that they who run from scratch The *lumpy* 'limit-man' may fail to catch». Punch, March 9, 1895, 111<sup>a</sup>: «Rides a bit *lumpy*, the Guv'nor does, nowadays, though his pluck's as good as ever, I must say». — But the adjective *lumpy* is in boating parlance also used of the river, when it is lashed into short, rubbly waves by a strong north-easter stemming the current; this sense being of course derived from the literal meaning of the word: 'full of lumps, or small compact masses'. Punch, 1872 I 138<sup>a</sup>: «One thinks with a shiver of lads on the river, As it rolls, cold and *lumpy* and rough: And mad as March hares the crew reckons that dares In such weather to strip to the buff».

<sup>1</sup> *A tight place*, in figurative use, means a «scrape»; Muret: «Verlegenheit, Klemme»; it seems to be originally sporting, perhaps prizefighters' slang, and Muret's is the first dictionary that has registered it: Rev. of Reviews, June 15, 1893, 591<sup>a</sup>: «Everyone rightly estimates the fealty of their (*sic*) friends by the help they are willing to give us when we are in a *tight place*». Lika Joko, March 9, 1895, 418<sup>b</sup>: «The fact is, that he should not have taken in hand to talk about what he does not understand . . . For, by doing so, he gets himself into an *uncommonly tight place*». Rev. of Reviews, April 11, 1895, 343<sup>a</sup>: «but Hornby, finding himself in a *tight place*, put the best face on the situation, hoisted the British colours, and fought his enemy». Academy, Dec. 12, 1896, 526<sup>b</sup>: «He finds himself in a *very tight place*, and escapes by the skin of his teeth». Literary World, June 4, 1897, 532<sup>b</sup>: «Enticed to sketch the woman journalist, the artist got out of a *somewhat tight place* by depicting a sublimated lady scribe with wings and a halo».

*so far* has declined to accept the Bayreuth master as the chief among the immortal composers, we have», etc.

In conclusion I would point to a Chaucerian use of *so* in exclamations, where Mod. E. has *how*. In this case *so* has a strongly intensive sense, which comes very near to that of the modern *so* in 'Thank you *so* much!' The following examples are all of them from Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*; II 943: And (he) gan to jape, and seyde, «Lord *so* ye swete!» II 1464: He seyde «O veray god, *so* have I ronne! — Lo, nece myn, see ye nought how I swete?» III 206: «And lord! *so* than gan grone Troilus, His brother and his suster for to blende!» III 965: «But lord! *so* she wex sodeynliche reed!»

## VI. As.

We have seen in the preceding section that *as*, originally a strengthened *so*, has gradually come to be restricted to the function of expressing equality, the function of pointing to degree becoming more and more appropriated to *so*.

In Middle E., however, *as*, especially in certain standing phrases, such as *as soon* and *as fast*, was frequently employed to express a high degree, the subaudition after *soon* and *fast* being 'as can be imagined', 'as may be', 'as possible'.

*Piers the Plowman* B, XIV 189: «He shulde take the acquittance *as quik*, and to the qued (= Evil One) schewe it». *Troilus and Criseyde* II 657: «(she) Gan in her heed to pulle, and that *as faste*, Whyl he and al the peple for-by paste»; *ibid.* III 1094: «But al was hust, and Pandare up *as faste*». *Canterb. Tales* G 1030 [*Chanouns Yemannes Tale*]: «This preest him took a mark, and that *as swythe*,

And this chanoun him thanked ofte sythe»; *ibid.* 1193: «Now yeve us drinke», quod the chanoun thenne, «*As swythe* al shal be wel, I undertake»; *ibid.* 1294: «Elles go by (= buy) us som, and that *as swythe*, Now, gode sir, go forth thy wey and hy the».

This use of *as soon*, *as fast*, *as swythe*, *as tite* etc., is obsolete now, though traces of it may long have lingered in popular usage; cf. Sheridan, *Rivals* I 1: «I'm devilish glad to see you, my lad. Why, my prince of charioteers, you look *as hearty*! — but who the deuce thought of seeing you in Bath?» — Modern usage in similar cases favours the formula *as . . . as . . . can be*; e. g. Macaulay, *Essays* I 341: mutton, which he (Dr. Johnson) pronounced to be «*as bad as bad could be*». Thackeray, *Vanity Fair* I 218: «She is *as poor as poor can be*». Vulgarly, or sub-colloquially, *can (could) be* is also omitted, so that for the expression of an exceptionally high degree of a quality we get such phrases as «*as cross as cross*», «*as hard as hard*»; e. g. *Pall Mall Magazine*, May 1899, 108: «The next-door house was *as dark as dark*». — The following instances of this curious mode of expression I take from that perfect mine of information on modern English usage, Flügel's Dictionary, i. v. *as*: George Eliot, *Adam Bede* I 255: «I went away *as still as still*». Ead., *Mill on the Floss* II 10: «Your hands 'll get *as hard as hard*». Trollope, *Orley Farm* II 245: «He's *as cross . . . as cross as cross*». Id., *Can you forgive her?* 183: «I've been as true to you, sir; so I have . . . *as true as true*». George Eliot, *Scenes of Clerical Life* II 107: «he's nervous as iver can be; he'll come back *as ill as ill*»; *ibid.* II 140: «The potatoes was *as watery as watery*». Mrs. Wood, *Verner's Pride* 2: «it was *as thin as thin*». Yates, *Land at Last* I 85: «a pretty

creetur, Mr. Ludlow, though *thin as thin* and *low as low*». — Some of the quotations would seem to show that the construction originates in the speaker's inability to call to mind the correct simile in a given case; an inability that has also given rise to such phrases as '*as wild as anything*' (Germ. 'so hart *wie nur was*' Du., 'zoo moe *als iets*', 'zoo leelijk *als wat*'), and '*too poor for anything*'; e. g. Richardson, Pamela II 57: «O my dear father and mother, I fear your girl will grow *as proud as anything*». Carroll, Through the Looking-glass, ch. 4: «They wept *like anything* to see Such quantities of sand». Punch, Aug. 20, 1892, 78<sup>a</sup>: «(we) have nothing to do except every seven years, when we all have to watch Mars *like anything*». — Cf. Rev. of Reviews, July 1892, 60<sup>a</sup>: «The *Westminster Review* is really *too dull for anything*». Punch, Dec. 12, 1891, 280<sup>b</sup>: «Why, my dear, it's almost *too sweet for anything*, meeting you again». Rev. of Reviews, Oct. 15, 1894, 378<sup>b</sup>: «The *Asiatic Quarterly* is becoming *too solid for anything*». Habberton, Helen's Babies 52: «I think they are *too funny for anything*». Howells, Lady of Aroostook 244: «She's *too queer for anything*». Rev. of Reviews, Dec. 15, 1896, 541<sup>b</sup>: «For the last six months the *Arena* has been *too strenuous* [in election business] *for anything*».

A very curious cropping-up of the old intensive or degree-marking force of *as* we have, I think, in the mode of speech about which Dean Alford thus delivers himself in The Queen's English, p. 118: «A correspondent writes: 'Many, especially I think ladies, say: «He is *not as tall as* his brother». Am I not right in saying that after a negative, *so* should be used — «He is not *so tall as* his brother».' — Such certainly appears to be the usage of our language, however difficult it may be to account for it . . . So



cannot be used in the affirmative proposition, nor as in the negative».

The fact is, that the use of the formula *not as . . . as* is markedly on the increase, also in written English, and I, for one, am not inclined simply to set it down to slovenliness in diction.

There must be some principle underlying this new departure, isolated instances of which, by the way, occur as early as the beginning of the eighteenth century; and it will now be our task to ascertain whether any such principle can be discovered.

If we compare the two following sentences:

1. John is as poor as William;
2. William is as poor as Job;

it is clear that the first says that John and William are both of them poor, and that John's poverty equals William's. It is also clear that in the first sentence the first *as* is strong-stressed as against the weaker-stressed word *poor*.

The second sentence on the contrary does not in the first place institute a comparison between William's poverty and Job's; what it does, is to mark the high degree of William's poverty by stating its equality to Job's proverbial poverty, and if we wish to read the second sentence correctly, we must give weak stress to the first *as* and strong stress to the word *poor*. That the first *as* has weak stress in sentences like the second, is proved by the undoubted fact that it may be omitted, as it actually is in such parallel sentences as «he is rich as Croesus», «his face was white as chalk», «she was thin as a lath», etc.

The first sentence, therefore, with *as* strong-stressed, denotes equality of poverty; the second, with *as* weak-stressed, denotes a high degree of poverty on the part of



the subject. If we make the first sentence negative, we deny the equality of John's and William's poverty. In theory this might mean two things: a) that John was less poor than William; b) that John was poorer than William. But in the practice of language, denied equality means inferiority on the part of the subject, as we see in the sentence, «He hasn't his brother's talent», which implies that his talent is less than his brother's. In the same way denied superiority means equality: if I say of a man that he is not my superior, I imply that I am his equal; denied inferiority means equality also, as we see in «He isn't poorer than his brother», which practically means that he is, at least, as well-to-do as his brother. In the practice of all languages, to negative one term in a graduated scale is to affirm the term that comes next to it in the descending line. If this is impossible, as in negating inferiority, the process is reversed, and we affirm the term that comes next in the ascending line.

If therefore in the first of our two sentences we deny the equality of John's and William's poverty, we affirm inferiority of poverty on John's part, i. e. the negation of the statement «John is as poor as William», is, that John is less poor than William.

In the all but universal English usage of our day the negative form of «John is as poor as William» is: John is *not so poor as* William, which as we have seen means «John is *less poor than* William».

But it has this meaning, only if *not* has strong, and *so* weak stress. If in the sentence «John is not so poor as William», we give weak stress to *not*, and extra stress to *so*, involving an abnormal lengthening of the vowel *o*, the meaning is twofold (*not* ambiguous): in the first place we

want to say that John is less poor than William, but in addition to this, the extra stress on the degree-marking adverb *so* enables us to convey the impression that William's poverty is very great indeed: «John is not so poor as William», with extra stress on *so*, therefore means: «John is less poor than William, who is very poor indeed».

A comparison with other Germanic languages tends to confirm this view. In Dutch «dit is niet zoo'n lekkere peer als de laatste», with extra stress on «zoo'n», and consequent lengthening of the vowel-sound, has exactly the same effect as extra stress on *so* in «John is not so poor as William»; and this is likewise the case, if in German we give a very strong stress to *so* in the sentence «diese Birne ist nicht so süß als die letzte».

The second of the two sentences given on p. 110, «William is as poor as Job», if negatived — a rare case, since degree can hardly be negatived, strictly speaking — would certainly run «William is *not as poor as* Job», with *not* strongly stressed; a somewhat tame statement which could only be made in direct contradiction of another's assertion that William was as poor as Job. This case of *not as . . . as* need not therefore trouble us further, but as I have said on p. 110, *not as . . . as* is very common in contemporary English in cases which have nothing to do with the one last referred to.

I shall now submit to the reader's consideration a copious array of quotations from modern authors, and a few XVIII century examples, exhibiting the formula *not as . . . as*. For part of the examples given I am indebted to Storm, *Engl. Philologie*<sup>2</sup> 697.

1. Rudyard Kipling, *Plain Tales from the Hills* [Three — and an Extra] 15: She was *not as* clever *as* Mrs. Hauksbee, but she was no fool.

2. McCarthy, *Hist. of the Four Georges* I 227: Other poets had *not as much prudence and sound sense as* Swift.
3. Thackeray, *Newcomes* II 36: The artists, for the most part, do *not* cry out their woes *as loudly as* some gentlemen of the literary fraternity, and yet I think the life of many of them is harder.
4. Id., *Pendennis* I 24: Not being in the habit of reading the *Calcutta law-reports* very assiduously, the European public did *not* know of these facts *as well as* people did in Bengal.
5. Id. *ibid.* II 6: «You are *not quite as tall as* Goliath, certainly», the other answered with a laugh that was rough and yet tender.
6. Forster, *Life of Dickens* 126: The Philadelphia chapter I think very good, but I am sorry to say it has *not made as much* in print *as* I hoped.
7. W. H. Mallock, *Romance of the 19th Century*, bk. III, ch. 6: But the rich man's task is *by no means as simple as* this.
8. Escott, *England* I 351: The system would *not* be *as severely* attacked *as* it now is.
9. Id. *ibid.* I 381: Though the business done by the Army and Navy Stores is *not as great as* that of the Civil Service Supply association.
10. Trollope, *Thackeray* 109: It has to be admitted that Pendennis is not a fine fellow. He is *not as weak, as selfish, as untrustworthy as* that George Osborne whom Amelia married in *Vanity Fair*; but nevertheless he is weak, and selfish, and untrustworthy.
11. George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda* III 290: He had only the small movements of gratified self-loving resentment in discerning that this marriage fulfilled his own foresight in *not being as satisfactory as* the supercilious young lady had expected it to be.
12. Dickens, *Dombey* I 117: I'm *not as strong and well as* Florence.
13. Id. *Sketches by Boz* 26: Some are *not as much* to be pitied *as* others are.
14. Id. *ibid.* 227: He did *not* make quite *as much noise as* at other times.
15. Id. *Christmas Car.* 42: Martha *warn't as late [as she now is]* last Christmas day by half an hour.
16. Hesba Stretton, *Doctor's Dilemma* I 230: My future was *not as black as* it might have been.
17. *Mademoiselle Mori* I 184: You have *not as pretty a maid now [as the one you used to have]*.

Stoffel, Intensives and Down-toners.

18. Ibid. II 39: I should *not* have been *as* good about it *as* he is.
19. Trollope, Prime Minister I 32: I do *not* care about it *as* much *as* a man should do.
20. Norris, My Friend Jim 43: I hoped that after all he might *not* be quite *as* hard to hit *as* I had supposed.
21. Id. *ibid.* 200: I am *not* quite *as* clever *as* I think myself.
22. Id. *ibid.* 202: He was *not* quite *as* cool *as* he had been earlier in the day.
23. Id. *ibid.* 248: We *haven't* always been quite *as* good friends *as* we once were, but that has been my fault.
24. Escott, England, etc. 18: *None* of these was the instrument of *as* much mischief, *as* much alienation from religion itself, *as* the country parson.
25. Crawford, Paul Patoff I 258: *Not as great as* one may fancy.
26. Id. *ibid.* I 274: She was *not* really *as* mad *as* was supposed.
27. Punch, Dec. 29, 1894, Preface to vol. 107: The New Village . . . may *not* be quite *as* picturesque . . . . *as* the old one.
28. Rev. of Reviews, April 15, 1897, 342<sup>b</sup>: «Ah! Colonel Burnaby did *not* treat that subject *as* well *as* you did in *Tancred*».
29. Ibid. June 15, 1895, 509<sup>a</sup>: There are *few* names which shine with *as* bright a lustre *as* that of Joseph Mazzini.
30. Academy, Aug. 29, 1896, 141<sup>a</sup>: «The Stream» is an elegy *not as* lovely — but also *not as* long — *as* Lamartine's most lovely but too long «Le Lac», an elegy which it recalls.
31. Rev. of Reviews, Jan. 15, 1898, 71<sup>a</sup>: For some years past Mr. Joseph Arch has *not* been *as* prominent *as* he was in the seventies.
32. Ibid.: Things are *no longer as* bad *as* they were when Joseph Arch was a boy.
33. Thackeray, Philip 126: Old Parr Street is *not as* gay *as* Pall Mall.
34. Dickens, Hard Times 64<sup>a</sup> (Househ. Ed.): I am going to tell you something that will rather surprise you, and that perhaps will make you think me *not* quite *as* shrewd *as* you usually do think me.
35. Id. Chuzzlewit 183<sup>a</sup> (Househ. Ed.): The bargain was *not* concluded *as* easily *as* might have been expected though.
36. Tauchnitz Magazine, January 1893, 71: He did *not* take the matter *as* seriously *as* he had hitherto done.
37. Ibid. July 1892, 45: But they did *not* sit *as* near to each other *as* they had sat then.

38. Rev. of Reviews, Sept. 15, 1897, 282<sup>a</sup>: The present condition of the political exiles [in Siberia] is *not as bad as* many would have us commonly believe.
39. Tauchn. Mag., October 1891, 34: Her mind was *not as strong as* when I had first known and loved her.
40. Literary World, Oct. 29, 1897, 325<sup>a</sup>: Mrs. Watson, who writes under these various aliases, is *not as well known as* she should be.
41. Thackeray, Philip 171: I *haven't been as lucky as* Brummell Firmin.
42. Punch, January 29, 1898, 41<sup>a</sup>: *Not* even Carlyle . . . . . forced this truth home to his generation *as powerfully as* you have forced it upon yours in vigorous English.
43. Richard Steele, Guardian, Nr. 3: (Anthony Collins, the freethinker) has not anywhere granted that the institution of religious men to serve at the altar, and instruct such who are *not as wise as* himself, is at all necessary or desirable.
44. Swift, Journal to Stella, Dec. 29, 1711: She was *not as much* in love with me, *as* I was with her.
45. Boswell, Life of Dr. Johnson I 22 (1823): Talking to me once himself of his being much distinguished at school, he [Johnson] told me, «they never thought to raise me by comparing me to any one; they never said, Johnson is as good a scholar as such a one; but such a one is as good a scholar as Johnson: and this was said but of one, but of Lowe; and I do *not* think he was *as good* a scholar [*as I was*].
46. Fielding, Tom Jones I 15: She would often thank God that she was *not as handsome as* Miss Such-a-one.
47. Sheridan, School for Scandal I 1: Your guardian, Sir Peter, and Lady Teazle, have *not agreed lately as well as* could be wished.

We have seen that *not so . . . as* may have two meanings according as *so* is weak- or strong-stressed: «John is not so poor as William», with *so* weak-stressed, means «John is less poor than William»; the same sentence with *so* strong-stressed, means «John is less poor than William, who is very poor indeed».

Now, as to the form *not as . . . as*, which has been coming in since the beginning of the eighteenth century,



we should naturally like to know whether it is also used in both these senses, or only in one of them; and in the latter case, in which.

Before, however, proceeding to attempt an answer to this question, we may as well dispose of a few cases of *not as . . . as*, where the use of *as . . . as* is due to the sentence containing another negation besides *not*, e. g. *neither*, *scarce*, etc., the two negations being equivalent to an affirmation: Spectator, Nr. 80 (June 1, 1711): What made their enmity the more entertaining to all the rest of their sex was, that in detraction from each other, *neither* could fall upon terms which did *not* hit herself *as much as* her adversary; Academy, July 29, 1893, 87<sup>c</sup>: We have met each of the characters before, times without number; there is *scarce* one that is *not as familiar as*, to a certain dogmatic gentleman, «the man from Sheffield»<sup>1</sup>.

In the sentence from Boswell's *Johnson*, numbered 45 in the quotations above given, *not as . . . as* may be due to the parallelism of *as . . . as* in the sentence immediately preceding; and this would seem to be also the case in the two quotations following:

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<sup>1</sup> «The man from Sheffield» played a conspicuous part in certain Police Reports in 1892, I think. All that I know about the matter is contained in the following quotations from contemporary literature: Punch, May 6, 1893, 210<sup>b</sup>: The Police have arrived at one important point about the recently arrested Townsend. They now say, «We know *that man, he comes from Sheffield*»; Punch, April 28, 1894, 202<sup>b</sup>: 'I know *that man, he comes from*' — but no, I recommend novel-loving readers to get this book, but I will not give any one of them this clue: suffice it that the 'missing word' is not '*Sheffield*'; Literary World, Dec. 7, 1894, 453<sup>b</sup>: Its price will be sixpence, and its editor Mr. Stanley Sprigg, the very able *man 'from Sheffield'* who at present edits *Sylvia's Journal*.

Bryce, *American Commonwealth* II 464: Experience . . . will recognize that the tendencies to evil in human nature are *not* perhaps *as* strong, but *as* various and abiding even in the most civilized societies, *as* its impulses to good. — Forster, *Life of Dickens* 74: We have a good sitting-room though, on the first floor, *as* large (but *not as* lofty) *as* my study.

But no such considerations will account for the use of *not as . . . as* in 46 out of the 47 quotations given on pp. 112—115, and we are still confronted by the question, what do English writers mean by using *not as . . . as* in such a sentence as, for example, Kipling's: «She was *not as* clever as Mrs. Hauksbee, but she was no fool»?

The solution of the problem to which a careful scrutiny of the examples given has led me, and which I would now submit to the reader's judgment, is the following:

I am convinced that in the great majority of the quotations numbered 1—47, the writers have used *not as . . . as*, because they wanted to express something more than *not so . . . as* can express in its printed form, viz. the sense of *not so . . . as* with *so* strongly stressed; a sense that I have defined on pp. 111f.

If Rudyard Kipling says of a lady that «she was *not as* clever as Mrs. Hauksbee», I am perfectly sure that he means to imply, not only that the lady was less clever than Mrs. H., but at the same time, that Mrs. H. herself was exceptionally clever. To express this double-barrelled sense the spoken language can make use of the exceptional stress on *so* in *not so . . . as*, as I have explained higher up; to symbolise it to the eye also, the instinct or whatever other name may be given to it, of English writers has had re-

course to the old intensive or degree-marking sense of *as*, which I have illustrated in the early part of this chapter.

*Not as . . . as*, therefore, as distinguished from *not so . . . as*, seems to me a perfectly legitimate development in language, since it enables a writer to mark also to the eye a distinction which, where *not so . . . as* is used, can be conveyed to the ear only.

If in the foregoing pages I have succeeded in discovering the principle which underlies the use of *not as . . . as* in definite cases, it is clear that no fault can be found with the use of *not so . . . as* in the same cases, except that in its printed form the latter phrase admits of a double interpretation, according as the *so* in it has strong or weak stress.

It cannot surprise us, therefore, to find writers wavering between the two forms of expression, e. g. Rev. of Reviews, Feb. 15, 1896, 119<sup>b</sup>: It was remarked the other day that after Mr. Gladstone *no* man excited *as* much interest and was observed with *so* much attention in the United States of America as Cecil Rhodes.

Nor would I be thought to hold that in all the examples given under 1—47 the writers in using *not as . . . as*, were actuated by a conscious desire to express the sense of *not so . . . as* with *so* strongly stressed. In some of the cases enumerated *not so . . . as* with weak stress on *so*, would in my opinion have better expressed the writer's meaning. In the following quotations, for example, I think *not so . . . as* with *so* weak-stressed (= less than), would certainly be more correct than the *not as . . . as* form used by the writers:

Froude, Bunyan 60: Children are *not as* able to control their inclinations as grown men, and one man is *not as* able to control himself *as* another. Dickens, Copperfield

II 119: I am *not as* good a girl *as* I ought to be. Hesba Stretton, Doctor's Dilemma I 203: I have *not* been *as* good a husband *as* I might have been.

But on the whole I venture to think that the great majority of the quotations I have given bear out the principle stated, some of them even in the most unmistakeable manner. As regards this last point I would bespeak the reader's special attention for the examples numbered 1. 3. 4. 5. 10. 12. 14. 24. 26. 27. 28. 29. 30. 31. 32. 34. 38. 41. 42. 43. 44. 46.

In future, therefore, I think, English grammars will do well at least to recognise the principle, and not to go on, with Dean Alford and many others, to set down «He is *not as* tall *as* his brother» as a violation of the rules of the Queen's English.

In conclusion, let me add that in such sentences as Kipling's «She was *not as* clever *as* Mr. Hanksbee», the first *as* requires a stress almost equally strong as that which *so* would demand if the same meaning were expressed by the sentence «She was not *so* clever *as* Mrs. H.»

On the other hand, abnormal stress on the first *as* in the affirmative sentence «She was *as* clever *as* Mrs. H.» merely emphasizes the notion of equality of cleverness, and does *not* imply that Mrs. H. was exceptionally clever. In this case, the use of *quite as* would produce the same effect which abnormal stress on *as* would do.

## VII. Fashionable, Colloquial, and Vulgar Intensives.

Lord Chesterfield, writing in 'The World', Dec. 5, 1754, thus delivers himself on the subject of fashionable words:

«Not contented with enriching our language by words absolutely new, my fair country-women have gone still farther, and improved it by the application and extension of old ones to various and very different significations. They take a word and change it, like a guinea into shillings for pocket-money, to be employed in the several occasional purposes of the day. For instance, the adjective *vast*, and its adverb *vastly*, mean any thing, and are the fashionable words of the most fashionable people. A fine woman (under this head I comprehend all fine gentlemen too, not knowing in truth where else to place them properly) is *vastly* obliged, or *vastly* offended, *vastly* glad, or *vastly* sorry. Large objects are *vastly* great, small ones are *vastly* little; and I had lately the pleasure to hear a fine woman pronounce, by a happy metonymy, a very small gold snuff-box that was produced in company, to be *vastly* pretty, because it was so *vastly* little. Mr. Johnson will do well to consider seriously to what degree he will restrain the various and extensive significations of this great word».

*Vastly* was evidently the fashionable intensive of Lord Chesterfield's time; it has long kept its ground, and is not out of date to such an extent as Prof. Storm assumes in his *Engl. Philologie*<sup>2</sup>, pp. 893. 936, and especially 1048: «*Vastly* kommt bei einigen engl. Schriftstellern noch vor, wie Anstey, Vice Versa 106. 148 etc; Miss Marryat, Death 184: *vastly* delighted etc. In der Umgangssprache ist es gänzlich veraltet und findet sich nur als bewußter Archaismus. — D. fam. *riesig* klein (Vieter)». And p. 936: «Ironisch paßt es noch sehr gut: Dickens, Chuzzlewit II 39: One or two *vastly* humorous articles». — The intensive *vastly* was in constant use in the early years of the present century, and seems to have been an especial



favourite with female writers and speakers. It is repeatedly found in Miss Edgeworth's and Miss Austen's works; George Eliot (Life, ed. by her Husband I 215) writes: «I like my town life *vastly*».

So late as 1859, *Punch*, Jan. 15, 22<sup>b</sup>, has: Every thing is as clean as can be expected, the waiters are nimble and civil, and the company *vastly* superior to the general run of customers at places of the kind. — The following quotations are contemporary: Review of Rev., March 15, 1895, 227<sup>a</sup>: She [Margot Tennant = Mr. Asquith] enjoyed herself *vastly*, made friends with everybody, and enjoyed existence as much as any young lady ever did; Literary World, Febr. 16, 1900, 139<sup>a</sup>: There are few readers but will be *vastly* interested in the accounts of the Princess's childhood. — Nay, it would seem that the incongruity involved in the collocation *vastly little*, at which we found Lord Chesterfield having his fling in 1754, has kept this phrase alive in humorous writing down to our day, e. g. *Punch* 1870 I 168<sup>a</sup>: Still the notion may be realised with *vastly little* trouble; *Punch* 1874 I 160<sup>a</sup>: To the world it matters *vastly little* what the words be of a song.

From the middle of the present century downward, the great intensive adverb in vogue has been *awfully*. The NED.'s first unmistakeable quotation for this «slang» use of *awfully* is dated 1859, and contains the phrase «awfully clever». At present it is perhaps more of a colloquial than a slang phrase. In the vulgar London dialect the vowel of the first syllable is diphthongised to the sound of the word *or*, and the adverbial termination omitted, so that we get an adverb often figured by the spellings *orful*, *orfle*, and even *offal*, e. g. Anstey, Vice Versa 45: You was took

ill sudden in my cab larst time. *Offal* bad you was, to be sure, to hear ye; and I druv' yer back.

The characteristic schoolboy intensive is *jolly*; Punch, Oct. 29, 1892, 204<sup>b</sup>: Why, I *jolly* soon knew there wasn't much the matter with you; Academy, Dec. 12, 1896, 526<sup>b</sup>: Dear Sir — it was *jolly* decent of you to send me that parcel of books. — Cf. Harper's Monthly, July 1893, 308<sup>a</sup>: He was *jolly* ill is British; *awfully* was British first, and is now American also; and *daisy* is American. — A correspondent in Notes and Queries, January 2, 1897, 14<sup>b</sup> quotes as follows from J. Ferne, Glorie of Generositie, 1586, p. 10: I have heard it received as good pollicie with wisemen, to match their sonnes, as it might be with a usurers daughter, of the city by us: for the increase of their patrimony. A *iolly* helpe it is, when as a noble Gentleman, through a liberall mind, hath something shortned his revenewes, to inlarge the same by the plentifulnes of their bagges. — Compare also the French phrase «il fait *joliment* froid aujourd'hui».

The intensives used in vulgar parlance and in the dialects, are exceedingly numerous. Vulgar speech will use almost any adjective or even participle, with a strong emphatic meaning, as an intensive. I have elsewhere treated of *bloody*, *blooming*, *blasted* in this sense; see my 'Studies in English', First Series, pp. 210 ff. 226. The following quotations exemplify a number of others.

Ill. London News, March 23, 1889, 354<sup>a</sup>: I once knew a young gentleman in the Guards who was very ordinary-looking — what is called in Wiltshire '*sinful* ordinary' — and he never imagined himself to be otherwise.

The English Dialect Dictionary i. v. *cruel* cites as a Dublin phrase «I'm powerful weak, but *cruel* easy» [I am

very weak but quite at my ease], said by a sick man; and from Baring-Gould, Gaverocks (1888), XXXII: «Her's *cruel* good, and her'll keep a terrible long time», as a Cornwall phrase.

A characteristic Scotch intensive is *gey*, the Southern *gay* (cf. the Southern intensive *jolly*): Punch 1877, I (vol. 72), 15<sup>a</sup>: *Mr. McLuckie*. Oo, aye! it's *gey* handy! We've jist jobbit the Cab for the coorse weather!!; Academy, January 9, 1897, 71<sup>c</sup>: «*Gey* ill to live with» will be the verdict of the reader on some of the Burtons. — The phrase between marks of quotation was the verdict of Thomas Carlyle's mother on her illustrious son. The Scotch phrase *a gey bit*, when applied to distance, curiously corresponds to the Dutch 'een aardig endje', Germ. 'ein hübsches Stück Weges'; cf. Walter Scott, *Guy Mannering*, ch. I: Kippletringan was distant at first *a gey bit*, then the *gey bit* was accurately described as 'aiblins three mile', and then the 'three mile' diminishes into 'like a mile and a bittock'; then extended into 'four mile or thereawa'. — The adjective *gey* is frequent in Northern and Scotch use in the sense of 'considerable, strong, violent': Rev. of Reviews, Sept. 15, 1897, 277<sup>b</sup>: «The Queen has had a *gey* shock the morn», said a Crathie woman to me, as she overtook me on the roadside, and passed the customary greeting.

Dickens, *Master Humphrey's Clock* III 122: a *mortal* lazy fellow; Bentley's *Miscell.*, May 1847, 439: «They were *mortal* sure; Miss Burney, *Evelina* 111: They 're *mortal* dear to look at. — Compare Dickens, *Nickleby*, ch. 6: For six *mortal* weeks the bears and boars had a holiday; Thackeray, *Vanity Fair* I 27: What keeps them dancing till five o'clock in the morning through a whole *mortal* season? — In the last two quotations the adjective *mortal* means 'interminable';

cf. 'any *mortal* thing' = any thing that may be imagined; 'not a *mortal* thing to eat'; German: 'kein Sterbenswörtchen'.

Punch, July 24, 1897, 28<sup>a</sup>: James be *desperate* fond of animals. — Bartlett, Dictionary of Americanisms, cites i. v. *desperate*: I am *despert* glad to see you. — Punch 1860 I (vol. 38) 205<sup>a</sup>: And on division, the Bill had what is termed, we believe, a Squeak<sup>1</sup> for it; for the numbers were 219 to 209 — whereat the Conservatives cheered *woundily*. Bulwer, Paul Clifford 101: He'll be *woundy* glad to see you. — On this word the orthoepist Smart observes: «An old-fashioned vulgar word, which follows the old-fashioned pronunciation of its primitive»; i. e. the diphthong in the first syllable of *woundy* is pronounced as in *hound*, not as in the modern pronunciation of the substantive *wound*.

*Consumedly* is old slang for 'confoundedly', but is often used as an intensive; Thackeray, Vanity Fair I, ch. 13: Money of which George was *consumedly* in want; Dickens, Nickleby I 254: Whereat Messrs. Pyke and Pluck laughed '*consumedly*'. — Cf. Farquhar, The Beaux Stratagem (1707) III 1: I believe they talked of me, for they laughed *consumedly*; id. ibid. III 3: You must know that I am *consumedly* in love. — «Probably sometimes associated with *consummately*», says the NED; «handed down by the dramatists of the day (ab. 1700), and now become a literary affectation»; e. g. in McCarthy, Hist. of Our Own Times II 313: Jokes which set she company laughing *consumedly*.

*Damnable* (for 'damvably'): Bunyan, Pilgrim's Progress I 152: After he went to the iron gate [of Doubting Castle] . . . but that lock went *damnable* hard, yet the key

<sup>1</sup> A (*narrow*) *squeak* = a hairbreadth's escape; Punch 1879 I (vol. 76) 161<sup>a</sup> [in *Essence of Parliament*]: Three *squeaks* in a week — for the sixty majority on the Zulu war was no better.



did open it. — Cf. Congreve, *Old Bachelor* I 1: I find I am *damnably* in love.

*Pernicious*: Punch, Oct. 20, 1894, 183<sup>c</sup>: Yet the 'boxes' common to the old eating-houses . . . were '*pernicious* snug', and sufficiently *private*, too, for business conversation and confidential communications.

Certain adverbs are used as intensives with definite verbs only; e. g. *badly*, in the sense of 'very much, greatly', occurs almost exclusively in connection with *want*, *need*, and then only in colloquial usage. I subjoin a few illustrations, since the NED has no quotations for this sense from contemporary literature.

Cornhill Mag., June 1884, p. 642 [*Giant's Robe*, ch. 38]: This presumptuous man here has been suggesting that your immortal dialogue wants cutting *badly*. Punch, April 24, 1886, 193<sup>b</sup>: But the fiddlers want weeding as *badly* as any overgrown garden. Punch, May 20, 1893, 237<sup>b</sup>: The fact is my wife wants her mother painted very *badly* — and I naturally thought of you [mark the ambiguity!]. Judy, Nov. 24, 1886, 243: Well, Muggins, how's business? — Oh, ripping! Got a commission this morning from a Clergyman. Wants his children painted very *badly*. — Well, my boy, you're the very man for the job. Academy, March 31, 1894, 263<sup>a</sup>: Having a good deal to say, and wanting *badly* to say it, and not caring overmuch how he says it.

*Badly* = 'very much, excessively', is rare with other verbs, but seems to be gaining ground, especially in connection with phrases expressive of falling ill, sickness, etc.: Rudyard Kipling, *Plain Tales* [*The Other Man*] 88: «But, in spite of all these things, she loved him very *badly*», where the underlying idea is, of course, that love is a kind of illness, which a person may have got very 'badly'; Acad-



emy, Febr. 13, 1897, 208<sup>b</sup>: «A little book which has reached us from Boston, containing upwards of a thousand authenticated proofs that children are imitative, is sufficient testimony that in America, or at least in Worcester, Mass., where this work originated, they have taken child-study very *badly*», where «child-study» is referred to as if it were a disease. Cf. *badly* beaten, *badly* wounded, *badly* injured; Rev. of Reviews, Oct. 15, 1894, 386<sup>a</sup>: The better they make the Board Schools, the more *badly* they handicap their own Church Schools in the struggle for existence.

The more dignified intensive with *want*, *need*, is *sadly*: Sterne, Sentim. Journey: I want a servant most *sadly*, quoth I. Punch, 1880 I (vol. 78) 12<sup>b</sup>: Our great schools want inspection *sadly*; Mrs. Marsh, Aubrey I 69: His good manners . . . were *sadly* to seek whenever he happened to be out of sorts.

*Mighty*, as an intensive before adjectives, would seem to be now chiefly used in ironical speech; e. g. This is all *mighty* fine, but what are we to do in the meanwhile? He looked *mighty* wise; It's all *mighty* well for you to say so, but . . . — This corresponds to Dutch usage: Ik geloof graag dat het (alle)*machting* mooi is, maar wat heb ik eraan?

A quite modern intensive is *simply*, used with adverbs, adjectives and verbs, in the sense of 'nothing less than'.

The tendency to exaggeration, to 'laying it on thick', which has caused so many adverbs to lose their pristine strong meaning, is apt to call forth its opposite, a sort of affected speaking 'within the mark', a studied modesty of expression, an ostentatious shirking of the least semblance of hyperbole, in great favour at this latter end of the century, and intended to work the effect which hyperbole is no longer able to produce on modern hearers who 'know the

ropes': hence a corresponding strengthening of the sense of such modest and unassuming words and phrases as *not bad*, *not half bad*, *tidy*, *decent* (see my 'Studies in English', pp. 204f.).

Cf. Academy, Dec. 12, 1896, 526 [from a Schoolboy's letter]: «Dear Sir — it was jolly *decent* of you to send me that parcel of books», where «decent» is the most complimentary adjective that the writer can think of to mark his gratitude for kindness received.

This tendency is markedly exemplified in the adverb *simply* when used in the sense of 'nothing less than'. It is usually placed before adjectives and verbs with a very strong meaning, and expresses the speaker's desire that this strong word shall be taken *au pied de la lettre*, and his assurance that this strong word is not used hyperbolically, but in sober earnest. *Simply* in these cases is an intensive in so far only as it deprecates the sense-weakening of strong words which results from the hyperbolism of the general run of speakers. This sense of *simply* is a modern development, not as yet referred to in the dictionaries, if we except Muret, who as the third sense of *simply* gives «durchaus, ganz und gar, schlechtweg». It corresponds to the Dutch use of *gewoon* in 't Is *gewoon* vervelend', and to the German 'Es ist *einfach* unmöglich'.

George Eliot, *Essays*, p. 164: Any attempt to disengage European history from its historical elements must, he believes, be *simply* destructive of social vitality; McCarthy, *Short History I* 15: His services to the cause of human freedom and education were *simply* inestimable. *Punch*, June 1, 1889, 259<sup>a</sup>: Mrs. Omulligan Slickers, the wife of the well-known Millionaire Pork King, who *simply* blazed with imitation jewellery. *London Society*, April 1885, 369: I shall always think of my first night in Caius College as

having been something *simply* awful. Judy, Aug. 19, 1885, 96<sup>a</sup>: I say, Mangold, can you tell me now what is the difference between the illuminated fountains [at the Inventories] and yourself? Well, they, you know, are *simply* marvellous, while you, ahem! — are marvellously simple. Punch, March 25, 1893, 136<sup>a</sup>: It's getting on *simply* splendidly. Punch, Dec. 1, 1894, 264<sup>b</sup>: It happened at five o'clock tea, in an interval of complete silence, and those two sounding smacks (= kisses) *simply* reverberated through the room.

To conclude this chapter I would draw the reader's attention to the adverb *merely*, which, though now the very reverse of an intensive, since in modern usage it means 'only, but, nothing more than', occurs as a decided intensive in Elizabethan authors, where it may mean 'completely, wholly, entirely', and is apt to be misunderstood by modern readers. The word is found in both senses in Shakespeare. In *Merch. of Ven.* IV 1, 339: «he shall have *merely* justice», we have the modern sense, but in *Hamlet*, I 2, 137: «Fie! 't is an unweeded garden That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature Possess it *merely*», the last word means «completely», and that is also its sense in *Antony and Cleopatra* III 7 48: «Give up yourself *merely* to chance», where, for example, the revised Schlegel-Tieck translation in my opinion wrongly has: «gebt euch dem *bloßen* Glück und Zufall in die Hand». Here is an unmistakable example of *merely* = 'completely, totally', from Florio's translation of Montaigne (ed. Morley), p. 264<sup>b</sup>: It is greater presumption (saith Plutarch) in them that are but men, to attempt to reason and discourse of Gods and of demi-Gods, than in a man *meerly* ignorant of musicke to judge of those that sing.

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## Part II.

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### On «down-toning» Adverbs.

#### I. Introductory.

In the preceding section of this book I have set forth how certain Intensive Adverbs expressing completeness of degree, have gradually come to mean a high or very high degree of a quality, while others, from originally being mere word-modifiers, have come to be sentence-modifiers too, so as to connote modal relations between subject and predicate.

In the present section I intend to treat in the same manner certain other adverbs of degree, which, to distinguish them from Intensives, I have ventured to designate as «down-toning» adverbs. Shading off in various directions, these «down-toners» express a moderate, slight, or just perceptible degree of a quality.

The most characteristic down-toning adverb is *rather*, which in modern parlance is frequently employed to take off the edge of what might otherwise produce an unpleasant impression on the hearer, or to tone down the harshness of a statement; e. g. Why, she has *rather* peculiar notions on the point; You are *rather* late; She is *rather* profuse in her expenditure.

Other down-toning adverbs, in which the apologetic note is less distinct however, are *slightly*, *somewhat*, *pretty*, *tolerably*, *a little*, and in more or less vulgar usage: *a morsel* (= morsel), *a mite*, *a bit*, *a trifle*. Of those last mentioned I have given illustrations in my 'Studies in English', pp. 233 f.

*A bit*, like *a trifle*, is frequent in modern parlance: Punch, Nov. 10, 1894, 227<sup>a</sup>: [Head of Departement to his Private Secretary] I say, Tenterfore<sup>1</sup> . . . don't you think these walls are *a bit* bare? Academy, Dec. 12, 1896: The other Harald at the battle of Stamford Bridge with Tostig, who was *a bit* of a bounder. Academy, July 16, 1898, 51<sup>c</sup>: A smart little compliment, smacking of the Boulevards. It struck us in view of the solemn business that was to follow,

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<sup>1</sup> «*Mr. Tenterfore*» is the name by which Punch regularly designates clerks in any of the Government Departments, such as the War Office, the India Office, the Foreign Office, etc., the nominal office-hours in the various departments of the Civil Service being *from ten to four*. Compare Punch, Nov. 3, 1894, 207<sup>a</sup>: You would have read in a comic paper, that never will be nameless, that Government clerks were like the fountains in Trafalgar Square (old style), «because they played *from ten to four*». Punch, January 20, 1894, 29<sup>a</sup>: He should have thought that *Mr. Tenterfore* (the Private Secretary) would have known better than to obtain admission at such a moment. Punch, 1876 II 243<sup>b</sup>: *Mr. Tenterfour*, Sir? Yes, Sir, *Mr. Tenterfour* [the Admiral's private secretary], Sir, left his compliments, Sir, and said as it was such a fine day he's gone out fishing. Punch 1881 II (vol. 81) 9<sup>b</sup>: Civil Service [Volunteer Review]. — In deference to the notion that the Servants of the Crown «*play from ten to four*», members of this gallant Regiment will march past reading the papers. Punch 1878 II (vol. 75) 97<sup>a</sup>: Mr. Henry de Snooks, of the Treasury, is at Ramsgate, and *Mr. Tenterfour*, of the War Office, will shortly leave Pall Mall for Boulogne. Punch 1879 I (vol. 76) 288<sup>a</sup>: *Tenterfour* left the Tin-Tax Office a quarter of an hour after the clock had struck the hour of closing. Punch, March 1, 1890, 98<sup>a</sup>: From Mr. C. Bounder to Mr. *T. Tenterfive* . . . [*Tenterfive* is a clerk in a Government Office].



as *just the least bit* trivial, *the least bit* inexpensive<sup>2</sup>; *ibid.* 52<sup>b</sup>: But is it more than pretty? And isn't it *just the tiniest mite* facile, obvious, *voulu*?

The very smallest degree of a quality is sometimes found expressed by a *leettle*, with long *e*, the lengthening of the vowel emphasizing the force of the phrase: *Punch* 1876 II 34<sup>b</sup>: . . . but ask it henceforth — To point just a *leettle* away from the North. *The New Budget*, May 16, 1895, 42<sup>a</sup>: He is beginning to find out, possibly, that the game of pull-Devil-pull-Baker . . . may be carried just a *lee-tle* too far. *Punch*, January 4, 1896, 6<sup>a</sup>: Can't you move a *leettle* farther, good Grant Allen?

Of this class of adverbs, *rather* and *pretty* present several points of interest, especially as regards their usage in contemporary English. I therefore select these two for more detailed treatment.

## II. Rather.

One of the most useful grammatical distinctions, on which, so far as I am aware, due stress has first been laid by Henry Sweet in his *New English Grammar*, is that between adverbs as word-modifiers, and as sentence-modifiers.

I have pointed out on p. 57 in the case of *quite* and *very*, that in «it is *quite* cold this morning», where *quite* has weak stress as compared with *cold*, the implication is, that the temperature is lower than I should expect under the circumstances at this season of the year; while «it is

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<sup>2</sup> *Inexpensive* is here humorously used for *cheap* in the sense of 'involving little trouble' and hence 'worthless, paltry', as in *cheap* jokes, *cheap* pathos.

*very* cold this morning» is a matter-of-fact statement, in which nothing of the kind is hinted at. There I also tried to make clear that in «it is *quite* cold this morning», *quite* is a word-sentence-modifier, and that in «it is *very* cold this morning», *very* is a mere word-modifier.

We might from an other point of view say, that the first of these two sentences contains a subjective statement, the subjective element being the speaker's surprise at finding the temperature so low, whereas the second sentence contains an objective statement, verifiable by the thermometer.

Now it would seem that the adverbs *rather* and *pretty* stand to each other in much the same mutual relation as that which obtains between *quite* and *very*.

Suppose a man under treatment at an hydropathic establishment, about to take his morning-bath, were to put his hand into the water, and say to the attendant: «The water's *rather* cold this morning», then he would be expressing unpleasant surprise at finding the water colder than he had expected. And if the attendant were to answer: «Yes, sir, it's *pretty* cold, but then it's the doctor's orders», he would merely make an objective statement as to the temperature of the water. The difference between these two statements might in Dutch be given by *nog al* to denote the subjective, and *vrij* to mark the objective point of view.

Like the subjective, or word-sentence-modifying use of *quite*, treated on pp. 61 ff., the use of *rather* just referred to is of comparatively recent growth.

*Rather*, as a rule, in Chaucer means 'sooner', the meaning 'by preference' being very rare in his works, where it is usually expressed by *lever*; see *Canterb. Tales* A 486 (ed. Skeat): Ful looth were him to cursen for his tythes,

But *rather* wolde he yeven, out of doute, Un-to his poore parissshens aboute; *ibid.* B 2341: For they enforcen hem alwey *rather* to speken plesante wordes, enclyninge to the lordes lust, than wordes that ben trewe or profitable.

As early as the middle of the sixteenth century *lever*, *liefer* had become antiquated, and was generally replaced by *rather* in the sense of 'more willingly, by preference, for choice'.

How readily the two meanings slide into each other, is shown by such modern sentences as *Punch* 1883 I 126: I'd *sooner* steer eight men than one woman any day; *Punch* 1877 II 105<sup>a</sup>: We would far *sooner* go somewhere else; Hardy, *Jude the Obscure* I 252: I'd *sooner* not walk up Chief Street with you, since we've come to no conclusion at all. — Webster quotes from Addison: I would *as soon* see a river winding among woods or in meadows, as when it is tossed up in so many whimsical figures at Versailles.

The adverb *rather* is used both with reference to persons in the sense of 'preferently, more willingly', e. g. '*Rather* than do that, I would die'; and with reference to things, in the sense of 'preferably, *pour mieux dire*', e. g. 'The lady appeared in her hair, or *rather*, in a wig'; comp. Mark 5, 26: She . . . was nothing better, but *rather* grew worse.

It is to this last sense of *rather* = '*pour mieux dire*', that we must, I think, refer the use of *rather* in the sense of 'somewhat, perceptibly', which we find exemplified in the modern phrases: It is *rather* cold to-day; I *rather* think so; a *rather* stiff piece of work; *rather* a long journey.

*Rather* = 'somewhat' does not occur in Shakespeare. In Samuel Pepys's Diary, *rather* is found before comparatives in a sense hardly distinguishable from that of 'somewhat'.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> of December, 1662, Pepys notes: «With my wife to the Duke's Theatre, and saw the second part of Rhodes, done with the new Roxalana; which do (= does) it *rather* better in all respects for person, voice, and judgment, than the first Roxalana».

Dr. Fitzedward Hall, to whose painstaking paper on *Had rather go* in the American Journal of Philology II 7 (1881), I am indebted for the reference just given, also cites *rather harder* from Pepys, but I cannot find the passage in my edition. Dr. Hall adds that *rather* in the sense of 'somewhat' did not become common till the age of Swift and Pope.

For the purposes of the present investigation I have turned over a good deal of light literature of the Queen Anne period, and I have not found that *rather* = 'somewhat' is common in either fugitive poetry, comedies, or essays of the time.

I am led to conclude that the modern use of *rather* = 'somewhat, perceptibly' did not become common until the middle of the eighteenth century.

In the great majority of the early examples of the absolute use of *rather* = 'somewhat', I find it followed by a comparative degree, just as in the passage I have cited from Pepys's Diary.

Wagner, Grammatik (1857), p. 372, quotes from Fielding's Joseph Andrews (1742): «Joseph and Fanny were *rather* more cheerful than yesterday», and, «Mr. Adams clenched a fist *rather* less than the knuckle of an ox».

Stratmann, Beiträge, p. 432, cites from Richardson's Sir Charles Grandison (1753) I 90: «rather younger».

A couple of hours' search through the early chapters of Fielding's Tom Jones (1749) has yielded the following

results. *Rather* = 'somewhat', before a comparative degree: Bk. I, ch. 3: When Mrs. Deborah returned into the room, and was acquainted by her master with the finding the little infant, her consternation was *rather* greater than his had been; Bk. II, ch. 2: And hence she had always behaved towards the foundling with *rather* more kindness than ladies of rigid virtue can sometimes bring themselves to show to these children; Bk. IV, ch. 2: Her complexion had *rather* more of the lily than of the rose; Bk. V, ch. 6: He had . . . had the honour of occasioning the violent death of one poor girl, who had either drowned herself, or, what was *rather* more probable, had been drowned by him.

*Rather*, as thus used, I have just now equated with 'somewhat, perceptibly', but a closer examination of the passages just cited will show that such an equation is only approximately correct. In the first quotation from *Tom Jones*, it would not be exactly the same thing, if Fielding had written: «her consternation was *somewhat* (or *perceptibly*) greater than his had been». What the writer wants us to infer from his use of *rather* before 'greater' is, that, if there was any difference between Mr. Allworthy's consternation and that of his housekeeper — which might seem doubtful — the excess was on her side. Hence in this case *rather* is more of a word-sentence-modifier than of a mere word-modifier, such as *somewhat* or *perceptibly* would have been: it has modal force, and expresses the conditioned nature of the statement about the housekeeper's consternation being greater than her master's.

But this modal force of *rather* would of course often be lost sight of, and before a comparative degree *rather* usually denotes the slightest perceptible degree of excess.



In contemporary English also, this use of *rather* before a comparative degree is still quite common, e. g. Rev. of Reviews, March 15, 1897, 223<sup>a</sup>: The resignation of the Prime Minister is an event which has occurred *rather* oftener than once every three years since the Queen came to the throne; Bryce, The American Commonwealth II 34: The German immigration, excluding of course the early German settlements in Pennsylvania, began *rather* later than the Irish.

This use of *rather* before a comparative degree must have originated in an ellipsis. In «her consternation was *rather* greater than his had been», the underlying construction must have been: «her consternation was greater, *rather than less*, than his had been». The awkwardness of having *than* two times in the sentence with only one word between, led, I think, to omitting *than less*, and prefixing *rather* to *greater*, to prevent *than his had been* being separated from *greater*, with which it is intimately connected. Thus, I think, *rather more than* stands for *more, rather than less, than*, etc.

I have found a passage in Walter Scott's Rob Roy, where the awkwardness of having two times *than* in close proximity in this construction, is exchanged for the still greater awkwardness of replacing the first *than* by *as*. In p. 107<sup>b</sup> of Camden Hotten's edition of Rob Roy we have: It was a hovel *rather worse as better than* that in which he had dined.

*Rather* in connection with a comparative has caused trouble to other writers than Sir Walter; in contemporary English it sometimes stands redundantly between a comparative and the *than* that points back to it, if the two are separated by intervening words, e. g. Rev. of Reviews, Febr. 15, 1896, 117<sup>a</sup>: It will be much *more profitable* to direct our attention to the nobler side of the man, *rather*

*than* to concentrate our gaze with microscopic malignity on all his weak points; Rev. of Reviews, April 15, 1897, 375<sup>b</sup>: In New York at least, it is considered much *better* to allow the children in slums to play in the streets till midnight *rather than* compel them to hoard<sup>1</sup> in their wretched tenements with their degraded parents.

Other cases in which *rather* means 'somewhat, perceptibly', may also best be accounted for by supposing an ellipsis, the omitted part of the sentence being easily supplied, or being self-evident.

In Tom Jones, for instance, Bk. I, ch. 4: «but, on the contrary, she *rather* took the good-natured side of the question», the reader will readily supply «than the ill-natured side». In *ibid.* Bk. I, ch. 6: «This confession, though delivered *rather* in terms of contrition», it is easy to see that «than the less passionate terms of confession», must be supplied.

And so in numerous cases in which *rather* is used without a *than* following, with verbs such as *choose*, *be inclined*, etc. Tom Jones, Bk. I, ch. 9: So far from complying with this their inclination . . . Mr. Allworthy *rather chose* to encourage the girl to return [to the road of virtue] by the only possible means; Bk. IV, ch. 6: for if there be some in the human shape who are not under any such

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<sup>1</sup> This intransitive use of *to hoard* = 'to lie hid', Germ. 'hocken', is exceedingly rare. The NED. labels it «Obs. rare», and gives one quotation from Turberville (1567). I am inclined to think that in the text it is a mistake for *to horde* 'to live as in a horde'; as in Byron, Sardanapalus V 1, 209: My fathers' house shall never be a cave — For wolves to *horde* and howl in. — In the following passage the substantives *horde* and *hoard* are confused: Literary World, June 1, 1900, 502<sup>b</sup>: Tony's splendid efforts to save the out-station from the *hoards* of natives surrounding it.

dominion, *I choose rather* to consider them as deserters from us to our neighbours [the brutes]; Bk. IV, ch. 6: In a word, she soon triumphed over all the virtuous resolutions of Jones; for though she behaved at last with all decent reluctance, yet I *rather choose* to attribute the triumph to her, since, in fact, it was her design which succeeded; Bk. III, ch. 6: She was, indeed, *rather inclined* to favour the parson's [Thwackum's] principles; but Square's person was more agreeable to her eye, for he was a comely man.

The quotation last given clearly shows the transition from *rather* = 'more willingly', to *rather* = 'somewhat, perceptibly', which necessarily takes place, as soon as the second part of the comparison, introduced by *than*, begins to be left out as self-evident, or easily supplied by the hearer.

I conclude that *rather*, when used with words denoting preference, such as *would*, *choose*, *be inclined*, or with words denoting excess, such as comparative degrees, by a quite natural transition came to mean 'somewhat, perceptibly', when the second part of the comparison began to be omitted.

As early as Richardson I find *rather* used in a case in which the notion of comparison is hardly perceptible: Sir Charles Grandison, Letter VI: «He has remarkably bold eyes, *rather* approaching to what we would call goggling». Here the underlying notion is of course: 'his eyes were goggling rather than bold'; but we see how very little is wanted to confer on *rather* the sense of the absolute *somewhat, perceptibly*. Richardson brought out Sir Charles Grandison in 1754; in 1758, Samuel Johnson wrote in Nr. 29 of *The Idler*: «I had lived in a kind of luxury which made me very unfit for another place; and was *rather* too delicate for the conversation of a kitchen»; here we are still farther

away from the notion of comparison, and the absolute sense 'somewhat' may be said to be firmly established.

This is convincingly shown by the following extracts from *The Discovery*, a comedy by Mrs. Frances Sheridan (Richard Brinsley's mother), brought out in 1763: Act I, Sc. 2: Though I think I was *rather* temperate too, this morning; *ibid.*: That was *rather* a little, though but a little, too much; *ibid.* I 3: The solemnity of his manner is almost ridiculous. — He is *rather* formal, I allow you.

That at the same time *rather*, also in such cases, continues to be felt as a comparative with *than* . . . omitted after it, is proved by the frequency with which in modern English we find it followed by the now almost meaningless *than otherwise*; e. g. Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, Preface: Even in the Beggars' Opera, the thieves are represented as leading a life which is *rather* to be envied *than otherwise*; Thackeray, *Vanity Fair* II 83: She liked Amelia *rather than otherwise*; Trollope, *Orley Farm* II 47: We shall be *rather* pleased *than otherwise*. — See numerous instances in Hoppe's *Supplement-Lexikon* i. v. *otherwise*.

In writings of the latter part of the eighteenth and the early part of the nineteenth century, *rather* = 'somewhat, perceptibly, to a certain extent', is quite common both before adjectives and verbs. Miss Burney writes, *Evelina*, p. 177 (ed. 1824): Not one opportunity could I meet with, while sir Clement was here, to inquire after his friend Lord Orville: but I think it was strange he should never mention him unasked. Indeed, I *rather* wonder that Mrs. Mirvan herself did not introduce the subject, for she always seemed particularly attentive to him.

Jane Austen, as a few minutes' search revealed to me, regularly uses *rather* in quite the modern way; e. g.



Sense and Sensibility (1811) I, ch. 7 (ed. 1833, p. 28): Mrs. Jennings, Lady Middleton's mother, was a good-humoured, merry, fat, elderly woman, who talked a great deal, seemed very happy and *rather* vulgar; *ibid.* I, ch. 1 (p. 3): He was not an ill-disposed young man, unless to be *rather* cold-hearted and *rather* selfish is to be ill-disposed; *ibid.* I, ch. 8 (p. 30): She *rather* suspected it to be so, on the very first evening of their being together, from his listening so attentively while she sang to them; *ibid.* p. 33: I *rather* think you are mistaken; *ibid.* p. 53: To some few of the company it appeared *rather* a bold undertaking, considering the time of year, and that it had rained every day for the last fortnight; *ibid.* p. 54: The morning was *rather* favourable, though it had rained all night; *ibid.* p. 59: Perhaps, Elinor, it was *rather* ill-judged in me to go to Allenham; *ibid.* Memoir of Jane Austen, p. VI: Her stature *rather* exceeded the middle height; *Pride and Prejudice* (1812) I, ch. 4 (p. 12): They were, in fact, very fine ladies; not deficient in good-humour when they were pleased, nor in the power of being agreeable where they chose it; but proud and conceited. They were *rather* handsome; had been educated in one of the first seminaries in town, etc.; *ibid.* p. 14: To be sure, that *did* seem as if he admired her — indeed I *rather* believe he *did* — I heard something about it — but I hardly know what.

So does Lord Byron, *Don Juan* II 156: A pleasure — like all pleasures — *rather* dear. *Id. ibid.* II 168: And every day by daybreak — *rather* early For Juan, who was somewhat fond of rest.

As regards this modern way of using *rather*, I have observed on p. 129 that in the great majority of cases it is employed to take off the edge of what might otherwise produce an



unpleasant impression on the hearer: *rather* is in fact an apologetic adverb, and as such has a down-toning, deprecatory or negative meaning in most cases.

Examples of this apologetic use of *rather* we have in several of the Austen quotations above given, e. g. in «I rather think you are mistaken», in which *rather* evidently serves to tone down the harshness of the statement.

There is another telling instance in Dickens's Christmas Carol, quite at the end:

«Hallo!» growled Scrooge in his accustomed voice as near as he could feign it. «What do you mean by coming here at this time of day?»

«I am very sorry, sir,» said Bob. «I *am* behind my time».

«You are?» repeated Scrooge. «Yes. I think you are. Step this way, sir, if you please».

«It's only once a year, sir», pleaded Bob, appearing from the tank. «It shall not be repeated. I was making *rather*, merry yesterday, sir».

To confess to a man of Scrooge's well-known way of thinking that he had been making merry, might well seem to Bob too risky a statement; so, he qualifies the confession by putting in the apologetic and mitigating *rather*.

The following opening passage of a story by James Payn, A Trying Patient, in Tauchn. Mag., July 1893, p. 1, which I give in full, strikingly illustrates the mitigating and deprecatory (beschwichtigend) force of the word *rather*.

«Well, my dear Doctor, how is she?»

Considering that the subject of inquiry was the condition of a sick relative under her own roof, the tone was a singularly cheerful one; considering also that Lady Delmore, the speaker, was a very great lady indeed, and the person addressed was the country doctor who had but recently come into the neighbourhood and had never been to the Hall before in his life, save to attend a servant, her tone was extremely familiar and agreeable. It almost seemed to anticipate a cheerful and agreeable reply.

Mr. Watkins, a wholesome young fellow enough, but not unaffected by the atmosphere in which he so unexpectedly found himself, and naturally anxious to please, was somewhat disconcerted. His face, as he entered the elegantly-furnished boudoir, had been very grave; the tidings it had been his intention to give were not of an encouraging kind.

«Mrs. Delmore's case», he stammered, «is, I am afraid, *rather* a serious one».

He had put in the «*rather*» because of a look of displeasure that had clouded her ladyship's face at his first words.

This takes us back to the modal force of *rather* to which I have referred on pp. 132f.; in fact, in most cases, *rather* does not modify a definite word in the sentence, but gives a definite subjective colouring to the sentence as such: it is a word-sentence-modifier.

From this it follows that it should be rarely used in objective matter-of-fact statements, where such subjective colouring would be out of place. *Rather* is one of those English words that foreigners attempting to write English had need to be exceedingly careful with.

Sentence-modifiers, as Henry Sweet points out in § 364 of his *New English Grammar*, are less tied down to a fixed place in the sentence than word-modifiers. This is the explanation of the word-order in such a phrase as *rather an old story*, instead of the more formal *a rather old story*, in which the modal force of *rather* is less clearly brought out. Compare the phrase *quite a young lad*, discussed *ante*, p. 62. Compare: *Punch*, January 10, 1885, 13<sup>a</sup>: It certainly would seem to be in *rather a bad way*. — *Notes and Queries*, March 2, 1895, 171<sup>a</sup>: Is Mr. Ferrar Fenton serious when he states that «like all our geographical names, it is from the primaeval Kymric language of our race, a branch of the Hebrew stock?» «All» is *rather a large order*. — *Rev. of Reviews*, June 15, 1897, 554<sup>a</sup>: Some of Mrs. Crawford's

reminiscences help to throw *rather a new light* upon the childhood of the Queen. — Dickens, Chuzzlewit 182<sup>a</sup> (Househ. Ed.): *Rather a good job* to begin with — eh, Mark? Id. Christmas Carol 25<sup>b</sup>: He was thinking of an animal, a live animal, *rather a disagreeable* animal. Id. Dombey and Son 79<sup>b</sup>: Cornelia led Paul upstairs to the top of the house, which was *rather a slow journey*, on account of Paul being obliged to land both feet on every stair before he mounted another. Id. Uncommercial Traveller 2<sup>a</sup>: Figuratively speaking, I travel for the great house of Human Interest Brothers, and have *rather a large connection* in the fancy goods way. Id. Great Expectations 98<sup>a</sup>: *Rather a stately house* of its kind, but dolefully in want of painting, and with dirty windows; — with the quotations following: Dickens, Chuzzlewit 132<sup>b</sup>: This gentleman wore *a rather broad-brimmed hat* for the greater wisdom of his appearance. Id. *ibid.* 136<sup>b</sup>: they stopped before *a rather mean-looking house* with jealousie blinds to every window. Id. Great Expectations 86<sup>b</sup>: a gentleman with *a rather perplexed expression* of face. Id. *ibid.* 87<sup>a</sup>: with *a rather anxious contraction* of his eyebrows.

With these essentially modern forms of speech it is interesting to compare such a sentence from Shakespeare as II Henry IV, I 2, 212: «I was born about three of the clock in the afternoon, with a white head and *something a round belly*», where the Collier MS. reading from the Perkins Folio «something of a round belly» is apt to excite suspicion, since it reminds us of the modern «he is *something of a wit*». Let me note by the way that *something* is often used adverbially in earlier writers where we now find *rather* before adjectives and verbs, e. g. Shak. Merch. of Ven. I 1, 123: I have disabled mine estate, By *something* showing a more swelling port Than my faint means would grant

continuance. Sterne, *Sentimental Journey*: The Monk, Calais: It was a thin, spare form, *something* above the common size. Colley Cibber, *The Nonjuror* II 1: I must own his civilities of late have been *something* warmer than I thought became him. Sheridan, *Rivals* III 1: My conversion is *something* sudden, indeed. — So still in Tennyson, as quoted by Webster: «My sense of touch is *something* coarse»; cf. *Academy*, April 9, 1898, 402<sup>b</sup>: Light verse — to use a title convenient, if *something* inept — is the Cinderella of English literature. — I think *somewhat* is more usual in such cases in modern authors, while *rather* has completely supplanted both of them in colloquial speech; cf. Dickens, *Chuzzlewit* 171<sup>a</sup>: a *somewhat* elaborate use of his pocket-handkerchief.

It is curious observe that in contemporary English the analogy of *rather an old story* leads to a similar construction with *somewhat*, reminding us of the Shakespearian «something a round belly». Flügel (1891) quotes from Mrs. Gore, *Castles in the Air* 208: «Of *somewhat a more ancient date*», and the *Rev. of Reviews*, April 1892, 401<sup>a</sup> has: The *National Review* for April is *somewhat a good number* this month.

To return to *rather*, the note of apology, mitigation, diffidence, modest self-depreciation, toning down of either praise or blame, is distinctly felt in the quotations following:

Thackeray, *Hoggarty Diamond*, ch. - II: I don't know how it was, but I and a gent by the name of Hoskins (eleventh clerk), who lived together with me in Salisbury Square, Fleet Street — where we occupied a very genteel two-pair — found our flute duet *rather* tiresome that evening. *Id. ibid.* ch. V: However, the diamond had its effect on my entertainers, as we have seen; *rather* too much per-



haps on one of them<sup>1</sup>; Id. *ibid.* ch. IX: «She has made *rather* a long visit», said I; «and I am sure that her nephew and niece are longing for her return». Punch, January 19, 1895, 28<sup>a</sup>: I *rather* regretted the fate of the picture, as it seemed to me that it might have served as a not invaluable advertisement. Punch, April 3, 1897, 160<sup>b</sup>: Why, we — we *rather* thought, you see, that, as this house belongs to Etta and me, and we 're neither of us well enough off to — to make a move without inconvenience, etc. Dickens, *Great Expectations* 79<sup>b</sup>: There was an air of toleration or depreciation about his utterance of these words that *rather* depressed me. Id. *ibid.* 88<sup>b</sup>: I *rather* envied them for being on the opposite side of the table. Id. *ibid.*: as if she *rather* thought she had had the pleasure of inspecting them before. Id. *ibid.* 105<sup>b</sup>: but [the keeper] was on terms of good understanding with [the convicts], and stood, with them beside him, looking on at the putting-to of the horses, *rather* with an air as if the convicts were an interesting Exhibition not formally open at the moment, and he the Curator. *Tauchn. Mag.*, June 1893, Nr. 23, 20: «I am afraid that I *rather* give myself away<sup>2</sup> when I explain», said he. «Results without causes are much more impressive». Dickens, *Chuzzlewit* 186<sup>a</sup>: but that he was for the time being, the lion, by popular election, of the Watertoast community, and

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<sup>1</sup> Compare ch. IV: «It's a beautiful diamond», said Mrs. Roundhand. «I have been looking at it all dinner-time. How rich you must be to wear such splendid things! and how can you remain in a vulgar office in the City—you who have such great acquaintances at the West End?»

<sup>2</sup> *To give oneself away* = «sich verplaudern; sich bloßstellen, sich blamieren; schlecht und unaufmerksam spielen» (Muret). Muret marks the phrase as rare, which is a mistake: it is strikingly frequent in colloquial English.



that his society was in *rather* inconvenient request, there could be no kind of doubt.

It is clear after this that the insertion of *rather* in a sentence of a laudatory character, produces the effect of «damning with faint praise»; e. g. Academy, Oct. 14, 1893, 317<sup>b</sup>: *The Doctor's Idol* is *rather* a well-told tale. Review of Reviews, Febr. 15, 1895, 151<sup>b</sup>: Mr. Gundry has a *rather* sensible paper protesting against the hostility with which Christian missionaries regard ancestor worship. Literary World, June 23, 1899: The illustrations, which are *rather* good, are reproduced by permission of the proprietors of 'Australasia Illustrated', in which they originally appeared.

In exact analogy with *quite a woman* (see p. 49), we find *rather* used before a substantive unattended by an adjective; e. g. Dickens, Uncommercial Traveller 13<sup>a</sup>: «On the whole, I should say, it was considered *rather* a distinction to have a complication of disorders, and to be in a worse way than the rest»; here, *rather* comes very near in meaning to 'almost'.

Reverting to the sentence mentioned at the beginning of this chapter: «The water's *rather* cold this morning», we may be sure that the poor victim of the treatment really finds the water cold, but is afraid to say so before the attendant; hence he timidly qualifies his statement by the mitigating, propitiatory adverb *rather*.

*Rather*, having thus come to mean 'to the slightest perceptible degree', is colloquially, by litotes<sup>2</sup>, often employed to express an exceptionally high degree. This figurative

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<sup>2</sup> *Litotes*, a figure of speech, by which a studied weakness of expression is intended to produce a very strong effect, as for instance in: *it is not half bad*; *he was not a little proud*; *you will pretty soon see the difference*.

use is in great favour with vulgar speakers; e. g. Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend* I 78 (Tanchu.): «But know him? Old familiar declining and falling off the Rooshan. *Rather*, sir».

Hoppe, *Supplement-Lexikon* i. v. *rather* 2, quotes from the *Slang Dict.*: «*Rather*, a ridiculous street exclamation synonymous with *yes*; 'do you like fried chickens?' 'Rather!'' and goes on to say: «die Antwort ist immer mit einem komischen Gesichtsausdruck, namentlich einem eigentümlichen Augenzwinkern begleitet: Dickens, *Sketches by Boz* 412: 'Do you know the mayor's house?' — 'Rather', replied the boots, significantly, as if he had some good reason to remember it». Cf. the following amusing example of this popular use of *rather* from *Punch*, March 13, 1897, 121<sup>c</sup>: On the Red Sea. — Miss Decima de Lackland (to Captain Midas Millo' who has been «going strong» ever since Brindisi). Oh! how I wish we had met twelve months ago! [Sighs.] — Captain. Why so? — Miss Decima. Because, you know, this isn't leap year [Sighs again]. — [«Did you rise?»<sup>1</sup> asked a friend subsequently of the Captain, who described the incident with much gusto. «Rise!» cried the Captain. «*Rather*, and hooked it»!]

This is the sense which in German is popularly expressed by «und wie!» or «na ob!» — Compare an analogous use of *a few*: Wash. Irving, *Salmagundi* 199: He was determined to astonish the natives *a few*! Dickens, *Bleak House* II 77: Mr. Smallwead bears the concise testimony: «*A few*!»

### III. Pretty.

*Pretty* as an adverb of degree before adjectives and adverbs — with verbs it is never used by itself — is some-

<sup>1</sup> *Viz.* to the bait; a metaphor taken from angling.

what older than *rather* as a sentence-modifier, which as we have seen must be referred to the second half of the seventeenth century, but did not come into general use before the middle of the eighteenth.

In modern usage *pretty* differs from *rather* in that it is strictly word-modifying, and never has modal force. Besides, *pretty* before an adjective is stronger than *rather*. We have seen that *rather* has a negative sense, and may be defined to mean «to the slightest perceptible degree»; *pretty* on the contrary has an affirmative sense, and means «to a moderate degree, moderately». Like *rather*, it may, by litotes, also be used in the sense of «to a very high degree», and this sense is more frequent in Standard English than it is in the case of *rather*.

We have seen on p. 132 that «it is *pretty* cold» is an objective statement regarding the temperature, which in Dutch might be rendered by *vrij koud*, *aardig koud*, and in German by *ziemlich kalt*, *hübsch kalt*. How markedly *pretty* differs in meaning from *rather*, before adjectives, will be clearly seen, if, for instance, in the quotation from Dickens's Christmas Carol, given on p. 141, we substitute *pretty* for *rather*, and read: «I was making *pretty* merry yesterday, sir», which would completely alter the drift of Bob Cratchit's words.

*Pretty* in the sense of 'moderately' originates in the adjective *pretty*, which in XVII and XVIII century English might mean 'moderately great', a sense of the adjective which is now archaic or vulgar, but corresponds exactly to the German *hübsch* in 'ein hübsches Sümmechen'.

For this sense, Johnson, and Flügel after him, quotes Abbot (1562—1633), Francis Bacon (a *pretty* quantity of earth), Boyle (a *pretty* while), L'Estrange (a *pretty* way off).

It is rare in Shakespeare. Alexander Schmidt cites two passages only, viz. Rom. and Jul. I 3, 10, where Lady Capulet says to the Nurse: «Thou know'st my daughter's of a pretty age» [Schlegel-Tieck: Du weißt mein Kind hat schon ein hübsches Alter], and Rape of Lucrece 1233: «A *pretty* while these pretty creatures stand».

In modern English it is still alive in the colloquial phrase «a pretty penny» (Dutch: een aardig stuivertje); e. g. Punch, Sept. 15, 1888, 121<sup>a</sup>: But we have since managed to secure the patent for a *pretty penny*, and you don't think we are going to do business without making a tidy profit.

It is doubtful whether the adverb *pretty* = 'moderately', occurs in Shakespeare's works. There is one passage in which it very probably has this sense, though it may also be an adjective: in All's Well II 3, 212, we have: «I did think thee, for two ordinaries, to be a *pretty* wise fellow; thou didst make tolerable vent of thy travel; it might pass». The parallelism of 'tolerable' and 'it might pass' renders it very probable that we must understand 'a tolerably wise fellow', and not 'a pretty, wise fellow' [Schl.-T.: einen leidlich gescheidten Burschen].

For the adverb *pretty* = 'moderately', Worcester quotes Sir Isaac Newton (1642—1727); Webster quotes Atterbury (1662—1732), and I find in Guy Mège, Engl.-French Dictionary (1679): «Pretty well, *assez bien, passablement bien*».

In the eighteenth century it is in common use, e. g. in Fielding's Tom Jones, Bk. IV, ch. 3: «The water was luckily *pretty* shallow in that part». It is instructive to observe that it would be impossible to substitute *rather* for *pretty* here, without completely changing the drift of the statement. That the water was shallow, was a fortunate circumstance, since it prevented Tom from



getting drowned there. If we say «the water was *rather* shallow in that part», we represent the shallowness of the water as an unfortunate circumstance, which, for instance, might cause our boat to get stuck fast in the mud. Tom Jones, Bk. IV, ch. 4: for whence only he can have learnt his notions of right or wrong, I think is *pretty* apparent; *ibid.* Bk. IV, ch. 14: but by the assistance of hartshorn and water, she was prevented from fainting away, and had *pretty* well recovered her spirits, when the surgeon who was sent for to Jones, appeared.

Shaftesbury, Characteristics (1711) I 362: though I am *pretty* certain it has been aimed at by this old acquaintance of ours. *Id. ibid.* 408: I gave you, I remember, a *pretty* full account of all but her name, in my letter. .

Fielding, The Miser [adapted from Molière's *Avare*] I 6: provided she can but make out a *pretty* tolerable fortune, I am even resolved to marry her. *Id. ibid.* I 5: you may perhaps have it in your power to do me a favour of *pretty* much the same nature. *Id. ibid.* I 3: Her condition is *pretty* much as it was yet. *Id. ibid.* I 2: My lady has staid at home too *pretty* much lately. — Shaftesbury, Characteristics I 54: had they their wills, I doubt not but their conduct and mien would be *pretty* much of a piece.

In the phrase 'pretty much the same' or 'pretty much of a piece', *pretty* is often omitted, so that in this case *much* gets the sense of 'nearly, almost, by far, almost quite'; and in these senses *much* is, by extension, also employed before *such* (*as*), before phrases implying resemblance or comparison, and before superlative degrees.

Roger Ascham uses *much what* = 'somewhat', 'pretty much' in *Toxophilus* (ed. Arber), p. 114: The beste colour



of a bowe yat I finde, is whan the backe and the bellye in woorkynge, be *muche what* after one manner.

*Much* = 'pretty nearly' is frequent in Shakespeare: *Lucrece*, 1301: *much* like a press of people at the door; *Meas. for M.* IV 1, 17: *much* upon this time have I promised here to meet; *Rom. and Jul.* I 3 72: I was your mother *much* upon these years; *Cymbeline* I 4, 60: it was *much* like an argument that fell out last night.

In contemporary English *much* in this sense is in great favour, e. g. Macaulay, *Hist. of Engl.* II 362 (Tauchn.): *Much* the greater part was still held by English emigrants. Byron, *Don Juan* XIII 7: (I) gaze where'er the palace or the hovel is, *Much* in the mode of Goethe's Mephistopheles. *Literary World*, Oct. 6, 1893, 227<sup>a</sup>: The confusion is magnificent. It is *much* such a confusion as might result at a children's party, if, etc. *Athenaeum*, Febr. 13, 1892, 206<sup>b</sup>: *Much* the most interesting letters are those of Yashiri. *Rev. of Reviews*, Sept. 15, 1892, 233<sup>a</sup>: *Much* the most sensible observations that I have seen so far, were the comments of Dr. Albert Shaw. Bryce, *American Commonwealth* I 513: This, technically called a 'strike', is *much* the most common. *Rev. of Reviews*, January 15, 1897, 38<sup>b</sup>: a rule-of-thumb Englishman who churns his butter *much* as his fathers did before him. *Academy*, Nov. 12, 1898, 241<sup>b</sup>: The style adopted is *much* that which a student might use for marginal notes on his lectures. *Ib.* March 13, 1897, 307<sup>b</sup>: The English scholar (= schoolboy) and the American scholar, when it comes to «howlers»<sup>1</sup>, are *much* on an equality.

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<sup>1</sup> *Howler* is university and schoolboys' slang for a howling' or very stupid blunder. Since this sense of the word is wanting in Muret, I subjoin a few quotations for it. The quotation from the *Academy* cited in the text goes on to say: «The Atlantic Monthly

Returning to *pretty* in nineteenth century usage, it is worth noting that it is very rarely employed before adjectives and adverbs expressing unfavourable or negative ideas: 'pretty poor', 'pretty ill', 'pretty weak', 'pretty small', strike me as somewhat unusual collocations. In the quotation from Tom Jones, referred to on p. 149, «the water was luckily *pretty* shallow in that part», the word *shallow* does not express a negative idea, since the shallowness of the water gives Tom a chance of escaping drowning. Looked at from another point of view, *shallow* may express a negative idea, if, for example, we refer to the insufficient depth of a river for purposes of navigation; and in this case '*rather* shallow' would be quite correct.

Hence we find especially such collocations as 'pretty well', 'pretty comfortable', 'pretty good', 'pretty gracious', 'pretty cheap', 'pretty often', etc., etc. Thackeray, Hoggarty Diamond, ch. 6: My aunt, in a few days, wrote a *pretty*

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cites a few recent mistakes of American origin. Answering a literary paper, one student referred to Wordsworth's Ode on Imitations of Immorality felt in Childhood . . . 'The Early Germans', wrote another, 'had no word for what we term a carbuncle, but the pain experienced from stepping on one, was so great that a forcible term had to be borrowed from the Latin'. — Academy, January 23, 1897, 123b: In his new poem, «The Conversion of Winckelmann», Mr. Alfred Austin has only just saved himself at the last moment from what schoolboys call a «howler» [by making use of a false quantity in the proper name Capaneus]. *Oxford Days*, p. 43: Three or four violations of the simple rules of Latin Syntax (commonly called «howlers») will «plough» a candidate. *Punch* 1883 II (vol. 85) 178c: And as for the choice of Alderman Fowler, — 'Tis a mystery, an intrigue, a joke, or — a *howler*. *Punch*, May 19, 1894, 240c: Your glance, though, into «howlers» [= misspellings] I'd conceal — No less, Sir, pries. — The NED. has. i. v. *howler* 3: «slang. Something 'crying', 'clamant', or excessive; spec. a glaring blunder, esp. in an examination, etc.»

gracious reply to my letter; *ibid.* ch. 8: he disposed of his 5000 *l.* worth of shares to a *pretty* good profit; *ibid.* ch. 10: My aunt sent for all her furniture from the country . . . which came *pretty* cheap to us young housekeepers, as we had only to pay the carriage of the goods from Bristol. Dickens, *Chuzzlewit*, 203<sup>b</sup>: She was *pretty* sure she hadn't. Quite sure, she might say.

In contemporary usage it would seem that the adverb *pretty* is especially in favour where, by litotes, a high degree is expressed by an adverb which originally denotes a moderate degree only. It seems that this is meant, when certain writers on English grammar tell us that *pretty* is especially used ironically.

Cf. Dickens, *Christmas Carol* 30<sup>a</sup>: We knew *pretty* well that we were helping ourselves, before we came here, I believe. *Id.* *Cricket*, 80<sup>b</sup>: I only know that I've been fighting *pretty* stiffly with the wind to-day. Thackeray, *Hoggarty Diamond*, ch. 2: I *pretty* soon let the fellows know that Mrs. Hoggarty . . . had given me a splendid diamond; *ibid.* ch. 6: «Why, thank you, sir», says I, «she is *pretty* well off»; *ibid.* ch. 10: I let him one day know *pretty* smartly that I was not only a servant, but a considerable shareholder in the company.

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